This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Reno City
Nov 9. 1919
R. G. Steele

This One
XJUW-WUA-K5DN

THE BEST NOVELS BY FERGUS HUME

The Mystery of a Hansom Cab	75 Cents
The Sealed Message	75 "
The Sacred Herb	75 "
Claude Duval of Ninety-five	75 "
The Rainbow Feather	75 "
The Pagan's Cup	75 "
A Coin of Edward VII	75 "
The Yellow Holly	75 "
The Red Window	75 "
The Mandarin's Fan	75 "
The Secret Passage	75 "
The Opal Serpent	75 "
Lady Jim of Curzon Street	75 "
The Green Mummy	75 "
The Solitary Farm	$1.25 "

He stood against the wall with his revolver leveled.—page 186

Frontispiece

The Mandarin's Fan

BY

FERGUS HUME

AUTHOR OF

"THE MYSTERY OF A HANSOM CAB," "THE RAINBOW FEATHER," "A COIN OF EDWARD VII.," "THE PAGAN'S CUP," "CLAUDE DUVAL OF NINETY-FIVE," "THE YELLOW HOLLY," "THE RED WINDOW," ETC.

With Frontispiece

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1904, BY
G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL

The Mandarin's Fan *Issued November, 1904*

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE ADVERTISEMENT,	9
II.	DR. FORGE,	20
III.	MISS WHARF AT HOME,	33
IV.	RUPERT'S SECRET,	45
V.	CONCERNING THE FAN,	57
VI.	BURGH'S STORY,	68
VII.	THE WARNING,	80
VIII.	THE BEGINNING OF THE BALL,	91
IX.	THE END OF THE BALL,	103
X.	A MYSTERIOUS CASE,	115
XI.	THE CANTON ADVENTURE,	128
XII.	AT THE INQUEST,	141
XIII.	THE WILL,	152
XIV.	A MYSTERIOUS LETTER,	163
XV.	THE ROTHERHITHE DEN,	175
XVI.	THE FAN MYSTERY,	185
XVII.	A DISAPPEARANCE,	196
XVIII.	A SURPRISE,	207
XIX.	A VISITOR,	218
XX.	THE MANDARIN EXPLAINS,	229
XXI.	WHO IS GUILTY?	242
XXII.	AFTER-EVENTS,	256
XXIII.	THE CHASE,	267
XXIV.	THE FULFILLED PROPHECY,	279

THE MANDARIN'S FAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE ADVERTISEMENT.

ONE July evening in the first year of the present century, two gentlemen were seated on the terrace of the mansion known as Royabay. A small rosewood table was placed between the deep arm-chairs, and thereon appeared wine, coffee, and a box of cigars. The young host smoked a briar and sipped coffee, but his guest, very wisely, devoted himself to superlative port and a fragrant cigar. Major Tidman was a battered old soldier of fortune, who appreciated good quarters and made the most of civilized luxuries, when other people paid for them. He had done full justice to a dinner admirably cooked and served, while Ainsleigh, the master of the feast, had merely trifled with his food. Now, the wary Tidman gave himself up to the perfect enjoyment of wine, cigar and the quiet evening, while his host restlessly changed his position a dozen times in ten minutes and gloomed misanthropically at the beautiful surroundings.

And these were very beautiful. From the moss-grown terrace shallow steps descended to smooth lawns and rainbow-hued flower-beds, and solemn pines girdled the open space, wherein the house was set. And under the radiance

of a saffron colored sky, stood the house, gray with centuries of wind and weather, bleaching sun and drenching rains. With its Tudor battlements, casements, diamond-paned and low, oriel windows, half obliterated escutcheons; its drapery of green ivy, and heavy iron-clamped doors, it looked venerable, picturesque and peaceful. Tennyson sang in the Palace of Art of just such a quiet "English home, the haunt of ancient peace."

On the left, the circle of trees receded to reveal the majestic ruins of an abbey, which had supplied the stones used to construct the mansion. Built by the weak but pious Henry III., the Norman-French name Royabbaye (King's Abbey) still designated the house of the courtier who had obtained the monastery from another Henry, less pious, and more prone to destroy than to build. The country folk had corrupted the name to Royabay, and its significance was almost lost. But the owner of this fair domain knew its meaning, and loved the ancient place, which had been in the Ainsleigh family for over three hundred years. And he loved it the more, as there was a possibility of its passing away from him altogether.

Rupert was the last of the old line, poor in relations, and poorer still in money. Till the reign of George the first the Ainsleighs had been rich and famous; but from the time of the Hanoverian advent their fortunes declined. Charles Ainsleigh had thrown in his lot with the unlucky Stewarts, and paid for his loyalty so largely as to cripple those who succeeded him. Augustus, the Regency buck, wasted still further the diminished property he inherited, and a Victorian Ainsleigh proved to be just such another spendthrift. Followed this wastrel, Gilbert more thrifty, who strove, but vainly, to restore the waning fortunes of his race. His son

Markham, endeavoring to acquire wealth for the same purpose, went to the far East. But he died in China—murdered according to family tradition—and on hearing the news, his widow sickened and died, leaving an only child to battle with the ancestral curse. For a curse there was, as dire as that which overshadowed the House of Atreus, and the superstitious believed—and with much reason—that young Rupert as one of the Ainsleighs, had to bear the burden of the terrible anathema.

Major Tidman knew all these things very well, but being modern and sceptical and grossly material, he discredited such occult influence. Expressing his scornful surprise that Rupert should trouble his head about such fantasies, he delivered his opinion in the loud free dictatorial speech, which was characteristic of the bluff soldier. "Bunkum," said the Major sipping his wine with relish; "because an old monk driven to his last fortifications curses those who burnt him, you believe that his jabber has an effect on the Ainsleighs."

"They have been very unlucky since," said Rupert gloomily.

"Not a bit of it—not a bit. The curse of Abbot Raoul, didn't begin to work—if work it did, which I for one don't believe—until many a long day after this place came to your family. I was born in this neighborhood sixty and more years ago," added the Major, "and I know the history of your family. The Ainsleighs were lucky enough till Anne's reign."

"Till the first George's reign," corrected the young man, "so far as money goes, that is. But not one of them died in his bed."

"Plenty have died in their beds since."

"But have lost all their money," retorted Rupert.

"It's better to lose money than life," said Tidman evasively.

"I'm not so certain of that, Major. But you should talk with Mrs. Pettley about Abbot Raoul's curse. She believes in it."

"And you, Ainsleigh?"

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. "We certainly seem to be most unlucky," said he, declining to commit himself to an opinion.

"Want of brains," snapped the Major, who was one of those men who have a reason for everything; "your people wasted their money, and refused to soil their hands with trade. Such pig-headedness brings about misfortune, without the aid of a silly old fool's curse."

"I don't think Abbot Raoul was a fool," protested the host mildly, "on the contrary, he is said to have been a learned and clever man. Aymas Ainsleigh, received the abbey from Henry VIII., and burnt Abbot Raoul in his own cloisters," he nodded toward the ruins; "you can see the blackened square of grass yonder, as a proof of the curse. Herbage will not grow there, and never will, till the curse be lifted."

"Huh," said the Major with supreme contempt, "any chance of that?"

Rupert smiled. "A chance that will never occur, I fear. The curse, or prophecy, or whatever you like to call it—"

"I call it rubbish," interpolated the sceptic.

"Well, doubting Thomas, it runs like this—rude enough verse as you will see, but you can't expect a doomed man to be particular as to literary style," and Rupert recited slowly:

"My curse from the tyrants will never depart,
For a sword in the hands of the angel flashes:
Till Ainsleigh, poor, weds the poor maid of his heart,
And gold be brought forth from the holy ashes."

"I spare you the ancient pronunciation, Major."

Tidman filled another glass with wine, and laughed scornfully. "I expect the old monk made up the second line to rhyme with ashes," he said, expanding his broad chest. "I've heard that rubbishy poetry before. But haven't the Ainsleighs always married poor girls?"

"Some did, but then they had money. It must be a poor Ainsleigh to wed a poor girl to fulfil the third line. My father and grandfather were both poor, but they married rich brides."

"And what became of the cash?"

"It went—I don't know how—but it went."

"Gold turns to dry leaves in the hands of fools," said Tidman sagely; "there's some sense in the old fairy tales. But the fourth line? how can you get gold from ashes?"

Young Ainsleigh rose and began to pace the terrace. "I'm sure I don't know," he said, "that's the curse. If I marry Miss Rayner, I certainly fulfil the third line. She is poor and I am a pauper. Perhaps when the enigma of the third line is solved by such a marriage the fourth line will be made clear."

"I shouldn't hang on to that poetry if I were you, Ainsleigh. Let some one else solve the third line, and the fourth also if he likes. My advice to you is to marry a dollar heiress."

Rupert looked savage. "I love Miss Rayner, and I marry her, or no one."

Tidman selected another cigar carefully. "I think you

are wrong," said he decisively. "You have only a small income, it's true, but you have this grand old place, a fine old name, and you ain't bad-looking. I guess Miss Jonathan of N'Y'rk would just jump at you."

"I love Olivia Rayner," repeated Ainsleigh doggedly.

"But the obstacles, my dear Don Quixote," argued the Major, lighting the cigar, "you are poor, and she, at the most, will inherit only a few hundreds a year from that aunt of hers. And that mass of granite, Miss Wharf, don't like you, nor does her companion, the Pewsey cat."

"Why do you call her a cat—the harmless creature?"

"Because she *is* a cat," said Tidman sturdily; "she'd scratch if she got a chance for all her velvet paws. But she hates you as old Miss Wharf does. Then there's Lady Jabe—"

"Oh heavens!" said Rupert and made a wry face.

"You may well say that. She's a bullying Amazon of uncertain age. But she'll do her best to catch Olivia for her nephew Chris Walker."

"Oh, he's a nice enough fellow," said Rupert, still pacing the terrace. "I've got nothing to say against him, except that he'd better keep out of my way. And after all Olivia would never marry a clerk in a tea-merchant's firm."

"But he's nephew to Lady Jabe."

"What of that? She's only the widow of a knight and hasn't a penny to leave him. Why should she want him to marry Olivia?"

"Because Miss Wharf will leave Olivia five hundred a year. Lady Jabe will then live on the young couple. And see here, Ainsleigh, if you marry Olivia with that income, you won't be taking to wife the poor girl mentioned in the curse."

"Oh, hang the curse!" said Rupert crossly.

"By all means," said Tidman serenely, "you didn't bring me here to talk of that, did you?"

"No. I want to ask your advice."

"I've given it—unasked. Marry a dollar heiress, and let old Jabe make Olivia her niece-in-law. By doing so you will be released from your pecuniary difficulties, and will also escape the hatred of Miss Wharf and that Pewsey cat, who both hate you."

"I wonder why they do?"

"Hum," said Tidman discreetly. He knew pretty well why Miss Wharf hated his host, but he was too wise to speak; "something to do with a love affair."

"What's that got to do with me?"

"Ask me another," replied Major Tidman vulgarly, for he was not going to tell a fiery young man like Rupert, that Markham Ainsleigh, Rupert's father, was mixed up in the romance, "and I wish you would sit down," he went on irritably; "you're walking like a cat on hot bricks. What's the matter with you?"

"What's the matter?" echoed Ainsleigh returning to the arm-chair. "I asked you here to tell you."

"Wait till I have another glass. Now fire ahead." But Rupert did not accept the invitation immediately. He looked at the lovely scene spread out before him, and up to the sky which was now of a pale primrose color. There was a poetic vein in young Ainsleigh, but troubles from his earliest childhood had stultified it considerably. Ever since he left college had he battled to keep the old place, but now it seemed as if all his trouble had been in vain. He explained his circumstances to the Major, and that astute warrior listened to a long tale of mortgages threat-

ened to be foreclosed, of the sale of old and valuable furniture, and of the disposal of family jewels. "But this last mortgage will finish me," said Rupert in conclusion. "I can't raise the money to pay it off. Miss Wharf will foreclose, and then all the creditors will come down on me. The deluge will come, in spite of all I can do."

Major Tidman stared. "Do you mean to say that Miss Wharf—"

"She holds the mortgage."

"And she hates you," said Tidman, his eyes bulging. "Huh! This is a nice kettle of fish."

Rupert threw himself back in the deep chair with an angry look. He was a tall, finely built young man of twenty-five, of Saxon fairness, with clear blue eyes and a skin tanned by an out-door life. In spite of his poverty and perhaps because of it, he was accurately dressed by a crack London tailor, and looked singularly handsome in his well-fitting evening suit. Pulling his well-trimmed fair mustache, he eyed the tips of his neat patent-leather shoes gloomily, and waited to hear what the Major had to say.

That warrior ruminated, and puffed himself out like the frog in the fable. Tidman was thickset and stout, bald-headed and plethoric. He had a long gray mustache which he tugged at viciously, and on the whole looked a comfortable old gentleman, peaceful enough when let alone. But his face was that of a fighter and his gray eyes were hot and angry. All over the world had the Major fought, and his rank had been gained in South America. With enough to live on, he had returned to the cot where he was born, and was passing his declining days very pleasantly. Having known Rupert for many years and Rupert's father before him, he usually gave his advice when it

was asked for, and knew more about the young man's affairs than any one else did. But the extent of the ruin, as revealed by the late explanation, amazed him. "What's to be done?" he asked.

"That's what I wish you to suggest," said Rupert grimly. "Things are coming to a climax, and perhaps when the last Ainsleigh is driven from home, Abbot Raoul will rest quiet in his grave. His ghost walks, you know. Ask Mrs. Pettley. She's seen it, or him."

"Stuff, stuff, stuff," grumbled the Major staring. "Let the ghost and the curse and all that rubbish alone. What's to be done?"

"Well," said the young man meditatively, "either I must sell up, and clear out to seek my fortune, leaving Olivia to marry young Walker, or—"

"Or what?" asked Tidman, seeing Rupert hesitating.

For answer Ainsleigh took a pocket-book from the lower ledge of the table and produced therefrom a slip of printed paper.

"I cut that out of *The Daily Telegraph*," said he, handing it to the Major; "what do you make of it?"

Tidman mounted a gold pince-nez and read aloud, as follows:

"The jade fan of Mandarin Lo-Keong, with the four and half beads and the yellow cord. Wealth and long life to the holder who gives it to Hwei, but death and the doom of the god Kwang-Ho to that one who refuses. Address Kan-Su at the Joss House of the Five Thousand Blessings, 43 Perry Street, Whitechapel."

"A mixture of the Far East and the Near West, isn't it?" asked Rupert, when the Major laid down the slip and stared.

"Lo-Keong," said Tidman searching his memory; "wasn't that the man your father knew?"

"The same. That is why I cut out the slip, and why I asked you to see me. You remember my father's expedition to China?"

"Of course. He went there twenty years ago when you were five years of age. I was home at the time—it was just before I went to fight in that Janjalla Republic war in South America. I wanted your father to come with me and see if he couldn't make money; but he was bent on China."

"Well," said Rupert, "I understood he knew of a gold mine there."

"Yes, on the Hwei River," Major Tidman snatched the slip of print and read the lines again; "and here's the name, Hwei—that's strange."

"But what's stranger still," said Rupert, bending forward, "is, that I looked up some papers of my father, and learn that the Hwei River is in the Kan-Su province."

"Address Kan-Su," murmured Tidman, staring harder than ever. "Yes. It seems as though this had something to do with your father."

"It *must* have something to do with him," insisted Rupert; "my father found that gold mine near the Hwei River in the Kan-Su province, and Lo-Keong was the Boxer leader who protected my father from the enmity of the Chinese. I believe he sent my father's papers to England—at least so Dr. Forge says."

"Forge," cried Tidman, rising, "quite so. He was with your father. Why not see him, and ask questions?"

"I'll do so. Perhaps he may tell me something about this fan."

"What if he does?"

"I might find it."

"And if you do?" asked the Major, his eyes protruding.

Rupert sprang to his feet and took up the slip. "Wealth and long life to the holder who gives it to Hwei," he read: then replaced the slip in his pocket-book; "why shouldn't I find that fan and get enough money to pay off Miss Wharf and others and keep Royabay?"

"But it's such a mad idea."

"I don't see it. If it hadn't to do with my father it would be," said Ainsleigh, lighting his pipe, "but my father knew Lo-Keong, and by the names Hwei and Kan-Su it seems as though the locality of the gold mine had something to do with the matter. I'll see old Forge and try to find this fan."

"Oh!" said Tidman, a light breaking on him, "you think Lo-Keong may have given the fan to your father?"

"Yes, and Forge may know what luggage and papers were sent home, at the time my father died—"

"Was murdered, you mean."

"We can't be sure of that," said Rupert, his face flushing, "but I'll find that out, and get hold of the fan also. It's my chance to make money, and I believe Providence has opened this way to me."

CHAPTER II.

DR. FORGE.

ROYABAY was distant five miles from Marport, a rising watering-place on the Essex coast. In fact so large was the town and so many the visitors, that it might be said to be quite risen, though the inhabitants insisted that it had not yet attained the height it would reach. But be this as it may, Marport was popular and fashionable, and many retired gentlepeople lived in spacious houses along the cliffs and in the suburbs. The ancient town, which lay in a hollow, was left to holiday trippers, and these came in shoals during the summer months. There was the usual pier, the Kursaal, the theatre, many bathing-machines and many boarding houses—in fact the usual sort of things which go to make up a popular watering-place. And the town had been in existence—the new part at all events—for only fifteen years. Like Jonah's gourd it had sprung up in a night; but it certainly showed no signs of withering. In fact its attractions increased yearly.

Major Tidman was a wise man, and had not travelled over the world with his eyes shut. He had seen colonial towns spring up and fade away, and knew how the value of land increases. Thus, when he returned to his own country with a certain sum of money, he expended the same in buying land, and in building thereon. This policy produced a lot of money, with which the Major bought more land and more houses. Now, he possessed an avenue of

desirable villa residences in the suburbs which brought him in a good income, and which, by reason of their situation, were never empty. The Major did not live here himself. He was a bachelor and fond of company: therefore he took up his quarters in the Bristol Hotel, the most fashionable in Marport. As he had shares in the company which built it, he managed to obtain his rooms at a comparatively moderate rate. Here he lived all the year round, save when he took a trip to the Continent, and, as the Bristol was always full of people, the Major did not lack company. As he was a good-humored little man, with plenty of small talk and a fund of out-of-the-way information, he soon became immensely popular. In this way the crafty Major had all the comforts of home and the delights of society, without bearing the burden of an establishment of his own. His sole attendant was a weather-beaten one-eyed man, who acted as his valet, and who knew how to hold his tongue.

Sometimes the Major would walk up town and inspect his property with great pride. It was balm to his proud heart to walk up and down the spacious avenue, and survey the red brick villas smiling amidst trim gardens. Tidman's birth was humble—his father had been a small tenant farmer of the Ainsleighs—and he had started life without even the proverbial shilling. For many years he was absent from his native land, and returned to find fortune waiting for him on the doorstep. To be sure he brought a nest-egg home with him: nevertheless, but for his astuteness in buying land and in building, he would not have acquired such a good income. So the Major had some cause for self-congratulation, when he paced up and down Tidman's Avenue.

Two days after his dinner with Rupert Ainsleigh, the Major, spick and span as usual—he always looked as though he had stepped out of a bandbox—was strutting up the avenue. Half way along he came face to face with a withered little woman, who looked like the bad fairy of the old nursery tales. She wore a poke bonnet, a black dress and, strange to say, a scarlet shawl. Her age might have been about fifty-five, but she looked even older. With her dress picked up and holding a flower in her hand, she came mincing along, smiling at the world with a puckered face and out of a pair of very black and brilliant eyes. She looked a quaint old-fashioned gentlewoman of the sort likely to possess a good income, for it seemed that no pauper would have dared to dress in so shabby and old-fashioned a manner. Consequently it was strange that the gallant Major should have showed a disposition to turn tail when he set eyes on her. She might indeed have been the veritable witch she looked, so pale turned Major's Tidman ruddy face. But the old dame was not going to let him escape in this way.

"Oh, good morning," she said in a sharp voice like a saw; "how well you are looking, dear Major Tidman—really so very well. I never saw you look younger. The rose in your button-hole is not more blooming. How do you keep your youth so? I remember you—"

But the Major cut her short. He had enough of flattering words which he guessed she did not mean, and didn't want her to remember anything, for he knew her memory extended disagreeably to the time when he had been a poor and humble nobody. "I'm in a hurry, Miss Pewsey," he said, twirling his stick; "good morning, ma'am—morning."

"If you're going to see Dr. Forge," said Miss Pewsey,

her black eyes glittering like jet, "I've just come from his house. He is engaged."

"I can wait, I suppose, Miss Pewsey," said Tidman, bristling, "that is, supposing I am calling on the doctor."

"Then you really are: not on account of your health, I'm sure. I do hope you aren't ill, dear Major. We all look forward to you shining at the ball, which is to take place at the Hotel Bristol."

"I may be there, Miss Pewsey. I may be there—in fact"—the Major flourished his stick again—"I am one of the stewards."

Miss Pewsey clapped together a pair of small claws encased in shabby cotton gloves. "There!" she cried in a shriller voice than ever, "I knew it. I said so to my Sophia. Of course you know I always call dear Miss Wharf my Sophia; we have been friends for years—oh, yes, for years. We grew on one stem and—"

"You'll excuse me, ma'am—"

"Oh, yes—I know you are so busy. But I was saying, that you can give me a ticket for my nephew, Mr. Burgh—"

"The tickets are for sale at the hotel," said Tidman gruffly.

"Yes, but my poor nephew is poor. He also has come from foreign parts, Major, as you did, and just as poor. You must give him a ticket—oh, really you must." Miss Pewsey spoke with an emphasis on every other word, and between her teeth, as though she was trying to prevent the speech escaping too rapidly. "Now, Major," she coaxed.

"I'll see, ma'am—I'll see."

"Oh! I knew you would." She clasped her hands again; "come and see my Sophia—dear Miss Wharf, and then you can give Clarence—that's my nephew's name,

sweet, isn't it?—you can give him the ticket. But don't bring *him*," added Miss Pewsey, jerking her old head backward in the direction of Dr. Forge's residence; "he's there."

"Who is there, ma'am?" demanded the Major, with a start.

"Why, that horrid Mr. Ainsleigh, and—"

Miss Pewsey got no further. The Major uttered something naughty under his breath, and taking off his hat with a flourish, bowed his way along the road, pursued by the shrill injunctions of the lady not to forget the ticket.

Tidman walked more rapidly and less jauntily than usual, and stopped at Dr. Forge's gate to wipe his red face, which had now assumed its normal color.

"By George!" said the old soldier, "that woman will marry me, if I don't take care. She ain't safe—she shouldn't be allowed out. Pewsey—a cat—a cat—I always said so. Lavinia Pewsey cat, to Benjamin Tidman, gentleman. Not if I know it—ugh! ugh!" and he walked up the steps to ring the bell. While waiting, his thoughts went from Miss Pewsey to Rupert. "I thought he had gone to town about that fan business," said the Major, fretting; "what's he doing calling on Forge without telling me?" and Tidman seemed very much annoyed that Rupert should have taken such a liberty.

True enough, he found young Ainsleigh sitting with Dr. Forge. The doctor was a tall, lean man with sad eyes and a stiff manner. He was dressed in a loose white flannel suit, in a most unprofessional way. But every one knew that Forge had money and did not practise, save when the fancy took him. With his watchful gray eyes and sad face and lantern jaws, Forge was not a prepossessing object or

a medical attendant to be desired. Also his hands had a claw-like look, which, added to his thin hooked nose, made him look like a hawk. He spoke very little, though what he did say was to the point; but he was not popular like the Major. A greater contrast than this mummy and handsome young Ainsleigh, can scarcely be imagined.

The Major came puffing into the room and looked around. It was a small apartment furnished with Chinese curiosities. Rice-paper painted in the conventional Chinese fashion adorned the walls, a many-tasselled lantern gay with color, dangled from the roof, and in each corner of the room a fat mandarin squatted on a pedestal. The furniture was of bamboo, and straw matting covered the floor. A bookcase filled with medical volumes looked somewhat out of place in this Eastern room, as did the doctor's writing table, a large one covered with papers and books, and strange-looking Chinese scripts. The room was as queer as its owner, and the atmosphere had that indescribable Eastern smell which the Major remembered to have sniffed up at Canton under disagreeable circumstances. Perhaps it was the revival of an unpleasant memory that made him sit down so suddenly, or it might have been the cold, gray, stony eyes of Forge.

"Well, Major," said Rupert, who looked handsome and gay in flannels, and who seemed to have lost his melancholy looks, "who would have thought of seeing you here?"

"I came to ask Forge to keep the exterior of his house a little more tidy," said the Major with dignity; "the steps have not been cleaned this morning, and there is straw in the garden, while the shrubs and flowers are dying for want of water."

Forge shrugged his thin shoulders, and nodded toward some egg-shell china cups and a quaint-looking teapot. But he did not speak.

"No." replied the Major to the silent invitation. "I never drink tea in the afternoon."

"Or at any time," said Forge, in a melancholy way. "I know you of old. Ainsleigh, take another cup."

"Not in the Chinese fashion," said Rupert smiling; "you drink it too hot for my taste and I like milk and sugar. But now I've told you about the fan, I'll leave you to chat with Tidman."

"The fan," said Tidman, sitting up as straight as his stoutness would let him; "ah, yes—I forget about that. Well?"

"Well," echoed Rupert lighting a cigarette, "I called at the joss house in Perry Street, Whitechapel, and a nice sort of den it is. A Chinaman heard my explanation about my father's connection with Lo-Keong, and then told me that the fan had been stolen from that gentleman, who is now a Mandarin."

"Lo-Keong was well on the way to the highest post when I saw him last," said Forge, preparing a roll of tobacco; "he was much in favor at the court."

"But I thought he was a Boxer," said Tidman, "and surely—"

"Oh, he gave up the Boxers, and curried favor with the Dowager Empress. That was seven years ago, when I was last in China. I met you there, Tidman."

Again the disagreeable recollection of Canton crossed the Major's memory, and he nodded. "What about the fan?" he asked Rupert again.

"It's of great value," said Ainsleigh, "at least this

Chinaman told me so. Lo-Keong is now a Mandarin, and is high in favor with the Dowager Empress—"

"And consequently is hated by the Emperor," murmured Forge.

"I don't know, doctor. I'm not up in Chinese politics. However, the fan was lost by Lo-Keong some years ago, and being a sacred fan, he wants it back. This Chinaman Tung-Yu—"

"Oh," said the Major, "then you didn't see Hwei or Kan-Su?"

"Those are names of a river and a province," said the doctor.

"I know," snapped Tidman, "but they were in the advertisement."

"Tung-Yu explained that they were used only for the purpose of advertisement," said Rupert, "but to make a long story short, I told him that I had seen the fan—"

"You saw the fan?" asked Tidman, directing a side look at Forge.

"A dream—a dream," said the doctor.

"No," insisted the young man. "I feel sure I have seen that fan, I can't think where. Perhaps it is among my father's effects sent from China by Lo-Keong years ago—"

"Twenty years ago," said Dr. Forge, "and Lo-Keong would hardly send his own fan. I remember the things coming. I came home immediately before. A Chinaman brought your father's papers and luggage to Royabay. He left them with your mother and went away."

"Were you not with my father when he died?" asked Rupert; "I always understood you were."

"No. I was at Pekin at the time. Your father and I were working the mine together, and I went about some

imperial concessions. While there I heard that your father was dead."

"Was he murdered?" asked Rupert earnestly.

"I really can't say. Lo-Keong said that he died of dysentery, but he was always a liar. He wouldn't be so high in favor with the court if he wasn't. Lying is a fine art in the Far East, and—"

"Yes—yes," said Tidman impatiently, "but what has all this to do with the fan?"

"I think it's all of a piece myself," said Rupert, "and I intend to get to the bottom of it. I have seen that fan somewhere—but I can't think—I can't," he reflected and shook his head; "no. But I have seen it, doctor, so it's no use your shrugging your shoulders. I want to find it and get that five thousand pounds."

"What!" cried the Major, leaping up on his stout little legs.

"Lo-Keong is willing to give five thousand pounds for the return of his fan," said Ainsleigh, who had walked to the door, "and I intend to earn it."

"Against my advice," said Forge, looking up oddly.

Rupert laughed. "Oh, you are afraid," he said smiling.

"Of you, not of myself. I know what the Chinese are, and have studied the race for years. I know how to deal with them; but you will get into trouble if you meddle with this fan business."

"And so I say," cried Tidman emphatically.

"Why, what do you know of the Chinese, Major?" asked Rupert.

"More than I like to think of," said the little man, wiping his bald head. "I went out to China for a trip seven years ago and met with an adventure in Canton—ugh!"

"What sort of an adventure?"

"Ugh!" grunted the Major again, "don't talk about it. It makes me cold to think of it. The Chinese are demons. Forge got me out of the trouble and I left China, never to set foot in it again, I hope. Ainsleigh, if you want that curse of yours to be realized, meddle with the fan. But if you want to keep your life and your skin, leave the matter alone."

"I'm going to get that five thousand pounds," said Rupert obstinately, "as soon as I can recollect where I saw that fan. The memory will come back to me. I am sure it will. Doctor, you won't help me?"

"No," said Forge decisively. "I advise you to leave the matter alone."

"In that case I must search it out myself. Good-day," and Ainsleigh strolled out of the room, light-heartedly enough, as he whistled a gay tune. Major Tidman looked grimly at the closed door, and then still more grimly at the doctor, who was paring his nails.

"Our young friend is ambitious," he said.

Forge laughed gently. "You can hardly blame him. He wants to marry Miss Rayner and save his ancestral home, so I am quite sure he will search for the fan."

"He won't find it, then," said the Major petulantly.

"Won't he?" questioned Forge sweetly, "well, perhaps not. By the way, you want to see me, Major. Mrs. Bressy tells me you called at least twice yesterday."

"Yes. She didn't know when you would be back."

"I never tell her. I like to take the old lady unawares. She is a Dickens character, with a fondness for drink, and for taking things which don't belong to her. I always go

away and come back unexpectedly. Yesterday I was in Paris. Now I am at Marport. Well?"

The Major had contained himself with difficulty all this time, and had grown very red in the face. The color changed to a lively purple, as he burst out: "See here, Forge, what's the use of talking to me in this way? You have that fan."

"Have I?" said Forge, smiling gently.

"Yes. You know well enough that the very fan—the jade fan with the five beads, was the cause of my getting into trouble in Canton. You got me out of the trouble, and you asked me to give you the fan when I thanked you."

"And you refused," said Forge, still smiling.

"Well, I did at first," said Tidman sulkily. "I risked my life over the beastly thing, and—"

Forge raised a thin hand. "Spare yourself the recital. I know."

"Well, then," went on Tidman excitedly. "You asked again for it when you came home, and I gave it to you. Ainsleigh is quite right. He *did* see the fan. I showed it to him one day before you arrived. I see he has forgotten, but any stray thought may revive his memory. I don't want him to have the fan."

"Why not?" asked Forge, shutting his knife with a click.

"Because I want the five thousand pounds for myself. I'm not so well off as people think, and I want—"

"You forget," said Forge gently, "you gave me the fan."

"And have you got it?"

"I have," he nodded toward a cabinet of Chinese work adorned with quaint figures; "it's in there."

"Give it to me back."

"No. I think I'll keep it."

"What do you want to do with it?" asked Tidman angrily.

Forge rose and looked stern. "I want to keep it from Lo-Keong," he said savagely. "There's some secret connected with that fan. I can't understand what the secret is or what the fan has to do with it; but it means life and death to this Mandarin. He'd give ten thousand—twenty thousand to get that fan back. But he shan't."

"Oh!" groaned the Major, "why did I give it to you? To think that such a lot of money should go begging. If I had only known what the fan was worth."

"You knew nothing about it save as a curiosity."

"How do you know?" demanded the Major.

Forge who had turned toward the cabinet wheeled round and looked more like a hawk than ever as he pounced on the stout man. "What do *you* know?" and he clawed Tidman's plump shoulders.

"Let me go, confound you!" blustered the Major; "what do you mean by assaulting a gentleman—"

"A gentleman." Forge suddenly released the Major and laughed softly; "does Benjamin Tidman, old Farmer Tidman's son, call himself so? Why I remember you—"

"Yes, I know you do, and so does that infernal Pewsey cat."

Forge suddenly became attentive. "Miss Pewsey, if you please. She is my friend. I may—" Forge halted and swallowed something. "I may even marry her some day."

"What!" shouted Tidman, backing to the wall; "that old—old—"

"Gently, my good Benjamin, gently."

"But—but you're not a marrying man."

"We never know what we are, till we die," said Forge, turning again toward the black cabinet; "but you needn't mention what I have said. If you do," Forge snarled like an angry cat and shot one glance from his gray eyes that made Tidman shiver; then he resumed his gentle tone. "About this fan. I'll make a bargain with you."

"What's that?" asked the Major avariciously.

"I'll show you the fan, and if you can guess its secret, I'll let you give it to this Tung-Yu of Hwei or Kan-Su or whatever he likes to call himself."

"But you don't want Lo-Keong to have the fan," said the Major doubtfully.

Forge opened the cabinet slowly. "So long as I learn the secret he can have the fan. I want to ruin him. He's a devil and—ah!" he started back. "The fan—the fan!"

"What is it?" asked Tidman, craning over Forge's shoulder at an empty drawer, "where is the fan?"

"Lost," cried Forge furiously, and looked like a dangerous gray rat.

"Five thousand pounds gone," moaned the Major.

"My life, you fool—my life!" cried the doctor, "it is at stake."

CHAPTER III.

MISS WHARF AT HOME.

THE best houses in Marport were situated on the cliffs. They stood a considerable way back and had small plots of ground before them, cultivated or not according to the taste of those who owned them. Some of these gardens were brilliant with flowers, others had nothing but shrubs in them, presenting rather a sombre appearance, and a few were bare sunburnt grass-plots, with no adornment whatsoever. A broad road divided the gardens from the grassy undulations of the cliffs, and along this thoroughfare rolled carriages, bicycles, and motor-cars all day during the season. Then came the grass on the cliff tops which stretched for a long distance, and which was dotted with shelters for nervous invalids. At one end there was a round bandstand where red-coated musicians played lively airs from the latest musical comedy. Round the stand were rows of chairs hired out at twopence an afternoon, and indeed all over the lawns seats of various kinds were scattered. At the end of the grass the cliffs sloped gradually and were intersected with winding paths which led downward to the asphalt Esplanade, which ran along the water's edge when the tide was high, and beside evil-smelling mud when the tide was out. And on what was known as the beach—a somewhat gritty strand—were many bathing machines. Such was the general appearance of Marport, which the Essex people looked on as a kind of Brighton, only much better.

Miss Sophia Wharf owned a cosy little house at the far end of the cliffs, and just at the point where Marport begins to melt into the country. It was a modern house, comfortably furnished and brilliant with electric lights. The garden in front of it was well taken care of, there were scarlet and white shades to the windows, and flower boxes filled with blossoms on the sills. Every one who passed remarked on the beauty of the house, and Miss Wharf was always pleased when she heard them envy her possessions. She liked to possess a Naboth's Vineyard of her own, and appreciated it the more when others would have liked to take it. She had an income of one thousand a year and therefore could live very comfortably. The house (Ivy Lodge was its highly original name) was her own, bought in the days when Marport was nothing but a fishing village. She knew every one in the neighborhood, was a stanch friend to the vicar, who was High Church and quite after her own heart in the use of banners, incense, candles and side-altars, and on the whole was one of the leading ladies of the place. She had the reputation of being charitable, but this was owing to Miss Pewsey, who constantly trumpeted the bestowal of any stray shilling given by her patroness.

Miss Wharf was a lady of good family, but had quarrelled with her relatives. She was a tall, cold, blonde woman who had once been handsome and still retained a certain portion of good looks, in spite of her forty and more years. She lived with her niece Olivia, the child of a sister long since dead, and with Miss Pewsey, to whom she gave a home as a companion. But Miss Wharf well knew that Lavinia Pewsey was worth her weight in gold, owing to the way she praised up her good, kind, devoted, loving, sweet friend. The adjectives are Miss Pewsey's own, but some

people said that Sophia Wharf did not deserve to have them attached to her. The lady had her enemies, and these openly declared, as the Major had done, that she was a mass of granite. Other people, less prejudiced, urged that Miss Wharf looked after Olivia, who was a penniless orphan. To which the grumblers retorted that Miss Wharf liked some one to vent her temper on, and that the poor girl, being too pretty, did duty as a whipping boy. This was possibly true, for Olivia and her aunt did not get on well together. In her own way the girl looked as cold as Miss Wharf, but this coldness was merely a mask to hide a warm and loving nature, while Miss Wharf was an iceberg through and through. However, on the whole, Sophia Wharf was well liked, and took care to make the most of her looks and her moderate income and her reputation as a charitable lady. And Miss Pewsey was the show-woman who displayed her patroness' points to their best advantage.

The drawing-room of Ivy Lodge was a flimsy, pretty, feminine room, furnished in a gimcrack fashion, of the high art style. The floor was waxed, and covered with Persian praying mats, the chairs were gilt and had spindle legs, the settee was Empire, the piano was encased in green wood and adorned with much brass, the sofa was Louis Quinze and covered with brocade, and there were many tables of rosewood, dainty and light, heaped high with useless knick-knacks.

The walls of pale green were adorned with water-color pictures, and many mirrors draped with liberty silk. Everywhere were large bowls of flowers, miniatures of Miss Wharf at various times of her life, curiosities from China and Japan and the near East, and all sorts of odds

and ends which Miss Wharf had collected on her travels. Not that she had been to the East, for the evidences of civilization in those lands came from Dr. Forge and Major Tidman, but Miss Wharf had explored Germany, Switzerland and Italy, and consequently had brought home cuckoo-clocks, quaint carvings, pictures of the Madonna, Etruscan idols, and such like things with which every tourist loads himself or herself. The result was that the drawing-room looked like a curiosity shop, but it was considered to be one of the prettiest drawing-rooms in Essex.

Miss Wharf looked too large and too substantial for the frail furniture of the room. She had a double chin and was certainly very stout. Very wisely she had a special arm-chair placed in the window—from which she could see all that was going on—and here she sat working most of the day. She was great on doing fancy articles for bazaars, and silk ties for such gentlemen as she admired, for Miss Wharf, old maid as she was, liked male society. The Major was her great admirer, so was young Walker, Lady Jabe's nephew. Sophia was not very sure of this last gentleman, as she shrewdly suspected—prompted by Miss Pewsey—that he admired Olivia. Rupert also admired Olivia and wanted to marry her, a proceeding which Miss Wharf objected to. Miss Pewsey supported her in this, for both women were envious of the youth which had passed from them forever. But Miss Wharf had also another reason, which Miss Pewsey knew, but of which Olivia was ignorant. Hitherto Sophia had kept it from the girl, but this afternoon in a fit of rage she let it out. The explosion did not come at once, for Lady Jabe was in the room drinking tea, and Miss Pewsey was flitting about, filling odd vases with flowers. Olivia sat on the settee very

straight and very cold, looking dark and handsome, and altogether too splendid a woman for her aunt to tolerate.

"Can't you do something?" said Miss Wharf, turning her jealous eyes on the girl. "I should think you must be tired, twiddling your thumbs all day."

"I'll do whatever you wish me to do," said Olivia coldly.

"Then help Lavinia with the flowers."

Olivia rose to do so, but Miss Pewsey refused her assistance in a shrill speech, spoken as usual between her teeth and with an emphasis on every other word. "Oh, no, dear, dear Sophia!" cried Miss Pewsey. "I have just finished, and I may say that my eye for color is better than Olivia's—you don't mind my saying so, darling?" she added to the girl.

"Not at all," replied Miss Rayner, who detested the sycophant. "I never give the matter a thought."

"You *should* think," said Lady Jabe, joining in heavily. She was a tall, masculine-looking woman with gray hair and bushy gray eyebrows, and with an expression of face that suggested she should have worn a wig and sat on the bench. She dressed in rather a manly way, and far too young for her fifty years. On the present occasion she wore a yachting-cap; a shirt with a stand-up, all-round collar and a neat bow; a leather belt and a bicycling skirt of blue serge. Her boots and shoes were of tanned brown leather, and she carried a bamboo cane instead of a sunshade. No one could have been more gentlemanly. "You should think," added she once more, "for instance, you should think of marriage."

Miss Wharf drew herself up in her cold way. "I fancy that Olivia, few brains as she has, is yet wise enough not to think of marriage at twenty."

"It would not be much good if I did," said Olivia calmly. "I have no money, and young men want a rich wife."

"Not all," said Lady Jabe, "there's Chris—"

"Chris is out of the question," said Miss Rayner quickly.

"And pray why is he?" asked Sophia, in arms at once She never liked Olivia to have an opinion of her own.

"Because I don't love him."

"But Chris loves you," said Lady Jabe, "and really he's getting a very good salary in that tea-merchant's office. Chris, as you are aware, Olivia, is foreign corresponding clerk to Kum-gum Li & Co. He knows Chinese," finished Lady Jabe, with tremendous emphasis.

"Oh!" Miss Pewsey threw up her claws, "how delicious to be made love to in Chinese! I must really ask Mr. Walker what is the Chinese for 'I love you.'"

"Olivia prefers to hear it in English," said Miss Wharf spitefully.

"Quite so, aunt," retorted her niece, her color rising; "but don't you think we might change the subject? It really isn't very interesting."

"But indeed I think it is," said Lady Jabe smartly. "I come here to plead the cause of poor Chris. His heart is breaking. Your aunt is willing to—"

"But I am not," said Miss Rayner quickly, "so please let us say no more about the matter. Mr. Walker can marry Lotty Dean."

"But she's a grocer's daughter," said Lady Jabe, who was herself the widow of an oil-merchant, "and remember my title."

"Lotty isn't going to marry you, Lady Jabe."

"Nor Chris, if I can help it," said the other grimly.

Miss Wharf was just about to crush Olivia with a particularly disagreeable remark, when the door opened and two gentlemen entered. One was Christopher Walker, a slim, boyish-looking young fellow, in that callow stage of manhood which sees beauty in every woman. The other, who followed, was Miss Pewsey's nephew.

There was nothing immature about him, although he was but twenty-eight years of age. Clarence Burgh was tall, thin, dark and had the appearance of a swashbuckler as he swaggered into the room. His black eyes snapped with an unholy light and his speech smacked too much of the Lands at the Back of Beyond, where he had passed the most part of his life. He was an expert rider, and daily rode a bucking, squealing, kicking stallion up and down the road, or took long gallops into the country to reduce the fire of the unruly beast. Burgh was bad all through, daring, free, bold, and had a good deal of the untamed savage about him; but he was emphatically a man, and it was this virile atmosphere about him which caused his withered aunt to adore him. And indeed Miss Wharf admired him also, as did many of the women in Marport. Clarence looked like a buccaneer who would carry a woman off, and knock her down if she objected to his love-making. Women like that sort of dominating lord of the world, and accordingly Mr. Burgh had nothing to complain of, so far as feminine admiration went, during his sojourn in Marport. But he had set his affections on Olivia, and hitherto she had shrunk from him. All the same, brute as he was, she admired him more than she did effeminate Chris Walker, who smacked of the city and of a feather-bed-four-meals-a-day existence.

"Oh!" squeaked Miss Pewsey, flying to the hero and

clasping him round the neck, "how very, very sweet of you to come!"

"Hadn't anything else to do," said Clarence, gracefully casting himself into a chair. All his movements were graceful like those of a panther. "How are you, Miss Wharf—Miss Rayner—Lady Jabe? I guess you all look like a garden of spring flowers this day."

"But flowers we may not pluck," sighed Chris prettily.

Burgh looked at him with contempt. "I reckon a man can pick what he has a mind to," said he dryly, and then shifted his gaze to see how Olivia took his speech. To his secret annoyance, she did not let on she heard him.

"Will you have some tea, Mr. Burgh?" asked Miss Wharf.

"Thanks. It seems to be the sort of thing one must drink here."

"You drank it in China, didn't you?" asked Lady Jabe.

Burgh turned quickly. "Who told you I had been in China?" he asked.

"My nephew Chris. He heard you talking Chinese to some one."

The dark young man looked distinctly annoyed. "When was that?" he asked Chris.

"Two weeks ago," replied the other; "you were standing at the corner of the Mansion House talking to a Chinaman. I only caught a word or two in passing."

"And I guess you didn't understand," said Clarence derisively.

"There you are wrong. I am in a Chinese firm, and know the language. As a matter of fact I write their foreign letters for them."

"The deuce you do!" murmured Burgh, looking rather

disturbed; but he said no more on the subject, and merely inquired if the ladies were prepared for the ball at the Bristol, which was to take place in six days. "I hear it's going to be a bully affair."

"Oh, charming—charming!" said Miss Pewsey. "Major Tidman is one of the stewards. I asked him for a ticket for you, Clarence dear."

"I'll go, if Miss Rayner will dance with me."

"I don't know that I am going myself," said Olivia quietly.

"Nonsense," said her aunt sharply; "of course you are going. Every one is going—the best ball of the season."

"Even poor little me," said Miss Pewsey, with her elderly head on one side.

"Huh!" said the irreverent Clarence, "ain't you past hoppin', aunt?"

"I can look on and admire the younger generation, dear."

"It will be a splendid ball," prattled Chris, sipping his tea and devouring very crumbly cake; "the Glorious Golfers are going to spend a lot of money in decorating the rooms. I met Mr. Ainsleigh. He is going—a rare thing for him. He goes nowhere as a rule."

Miss Wharf glanced sharply at her niece, but beyond a faint flush she could detect no sign of emotion. "People who are as poor as young Ainsleigh can't afford to go out," she said deliberately. "I think the wisest thing that young man could do would be to marry a rich girl," and she again looked at Olivia.

"He is certainly very handsome," said Lady Jabe, pensively, "very much like his mother. She was a fine-looking woman, one of the Vanes of Heathersham."

"I remember her," said Miss Wharf, her color rising, "and I never thought she was good-looking myself."

"Not to compare to you, dear," said the sycophant.

But this time Miss Pewsey made a mistake. The remark did not seem to please Miss Wharf. "I don't care for comparisons," she said sharply, "it's bad taste to make them. I like Mr. Ainsleigh, but I don't approve of his idling."

"He has never been brought up to do anything," said Lady Jabe.

"Then he ought to turn his hands to making money in some way. That place is mortgaged and at any time may be sold. Then he won't have a roof over his head."

"I have never met Ainsleigh," said Burgh musingly. "I guess I'd like to have a jaw along o' him. Wasn't his father murdered in China?"

Miss Wharf became suddenly pale. "It is said that he was, but I don't believe it."

"Then he's alive," said Clarence pertinaciously, and looking at her.

"No. He's dead, but he died of dysentery, according to Dr. Forge, who was with him when he died—somewhere in the north, I believe."

Burgh evidently stored this in his memory and looked keenly at the woman, whose bosom rose and fell and whose color came and went under his steady gaze. Miss Pewsey saw that the persistent look was annoying her patroness, and touched her nephew's arm gently. The touch recalled Burgh to his senses and he looked away. This time his eyes rested on Olivia. Her color was high and apparently she had been listening with interest to the conversation.

"Huh!" thought the swashbuckler, "and it was about young Ainsleigh," and he stored this in his memory also.

To make a sensation, which he dearly loved to do, Chris Walker announced that he would bring a distinguished visitor to the ball of the Glorious Golfers. "He's a Chinaman," said he pompously, "and was mixed up in the Boxer rebellion."

None of the ladies seemed impressed, as none of them knew anything about the Boxers, or their rebellion. But Burgh looked up. "Who is he, anyhow?" he demanded, compressing his lips.

"A Chinese gentleman called Tung-Yu."

"What a very extraordinary name," said Miss Pewsey, and suddenly began to take a deep interest in matters Chinese. While she chatted with Chris, who was willing to afford her all information, Burgh folded his arms and leaned back, apparently thinking deeply. His face was not pleasant to behold. Olivia saw the evil look and shivered. Then she rose and was about to steal from the room, when her aunt called to her sharply. "Don't go, Olivia; I want to speak with you."

"And I want to take my usual walk," said Lady Jabe, rising and settling her collar. "Chris?"

A tap on the shoulder brought the slim young man to his feet, and giving his arm to his masculine aunt the two departed. Burgh rose also. "I guess I'll make tracks also," he said smartly. "Walker, you and I can have a yarn together, later."

Miss Pewsey followed her nephew to the door. "Do you wish to ask young Mr. Walker more about Tung-Yu?" she asked.

Clarence wheeled round quickly. "What do you know of him, aunt?"

"It's such a strange name," simpered Miss Pewsey, looking very innocent, "and I am interested in China. You were out there a long time, Clarence."

"Among other places, yes. I hung round a bit."

"Then you must tell me all about the natives," said Miss Pewsey; "I want to know of their robes and their fans and—"

"Fans!" said Burgh, starting: but Miss Pewsey with an artificial laugh flitted back into the room, leaving him uneasy and nonplussed. He walked away frowning darkly.

Olivia would have walked away also frowning, as she was indignant at the way in which her aunt had spoken of Rupert. But Miss Wharf gave her no chance of leaving the room or the house. Olivia had never seen her aunt so pale or upset. She looked as white as chalk, and controlled her emotion with difficulty. Lavinia Pewsey glanced at the two, guessed there was about to be a row, and glided away. She always kept out of trouble.

"Now," said Miss Wharf when they were alone, "I want an explanation."

CHAPTER IV.

RUPERT'S SECRET.

OLIVIA was astonished to see the emotion of her aunt, for as a rule Miss Wharf was cold and self-contained. The two had never got on well together, and the elder woman was undeniably jealous of the youth and superior good looks of the younger. But as Olivia owed bed and board to her aunt, she always behaved as well as possible to one who was very trying in many ways. It is only just to say that Miss Pewsey made matters much worse by tale-bearing, and probably had she been out of the house Miss Wharf and her niece might have got on better. But they could never have been congenial companions. The difference between their natures was too great.

"Yes," said Miss Wharf, throwing herself back in her seat, and feeling irritated by the silence of Olivia. "I want an explanation."

"What about?" asked the girl, seating herself opposite and folding her hands, which, Miss Wharf noticed with bitterness, were more slender and delicate than her own.

"You know well enough."

"If it's about Rupert—"

"There!" snapped the aunt, "I knew you would guess. Yes, it is about young Ainsleigh, and how dare you call him Rupert?"

"Because I love him," said Olivia firmly, and looked directly into the cold blue eyes of her aunt.

"Then you must put this love out of your head. You shall never marry him—never—never—never!"

"If I choose, and I do choose," said Olivia calmly, but with a fine color, "I shall certainly marry him. I am of age—"

"Yes, and a pauper."

"Rupert would not marry me for my money."

"He is wise; for you have none."

"It is kind of you to speak to me in this way," said Olivia, "to remind me of obligations. I am aware that my parents died poor and left me a penniless orphan. I am aware that you took me in and educated me and—"

"And acted like a mother to you," said Miss Wharf vehemently.

"No. You never acted like a mother. With you I have had a most unhappy life."

"Olivia," the elder woman started furiously from her chair, "how dare you say that? Have I grudged you clothes or food? Did I not send you to a first-class school and—"

"So far as material things are concerned you have done everything, Aunt Sophia, and I thank you for what you have done—"

"A fine way you have of showing it," scoffed Miss Wharf.

"But a mother you have never been," went on Olivia calmly; "you have never given me a kind word; you speak to me before visitors as you should not do: you make me slave for you and run messages and talk of me to others as though I were a servant. What love have you ever shown me?" demanded Olivia, starting up in her turn, and also becoming excited. "I long for love. My heart yearns for

it. I would like to be a daughter to you, but always you have kept me at arm's length. Aunt Sophia, let me go. I can earn my bread as a governess, or as a typist. It will be better for us both."

"No," said Aunt Sophia, looking as hard as stone. "I shall not let you go. If you have any gratitude in you, you will remain and help me to manage the house."

"You have Miss Pewsey."

"She is not a relative, you are."

"And so you treat me worse than you do her. Well, Aunt Sophia, I am not ungrateful, though you seem to think I am. I shall stop with you. I only ask for a little more consideration."

"I give you every consideration. As for love, I cannot give it to you or to any one. I gave all the love my nature was capable of feeling to Markham Ainsleigh, and he rejected my love. Yes, you may look astonished, but it was this man's father who broke my heart."

"And that is why you don't want Rupert to marry me."

"That is the reason," said Miss Wharf, sitting down and growing more her calm, stony self. "I was almost engaged to Markham Ainsleigh; but he saw Violet Vane and fell in love with her. He left me and made her his wife. Can you wonder that I hate the son of the woman who stole my love away from me?"

"Rupert is the son of the man you loved—"

"And of the man who cheated me. Look at my lonely life, at my starved heart. I hate the Ainsleighs—there's only one left, but I hate him. And when I heard Markham was murdered in China I was glad—yes, very glad."

"What an unforgiving nature you have."

"I have every right to be unforgiving. Markham

ruined my life. And do you think I'll let you marry Rupert—the son of that woman? No! Marry him, and I leave what money I have to Miss Pewsey."

"You can if you like, Aunt Sophia. I don't want your money."

"Reflect," said Miss Wharf violently. "I have a thousand a year. Half of that goes to a distant relative, and the remainder you shall have if you will give this man up. Five hundred a year is not to be thrown away."

"I cannot give Rupert up," said Olivia firmly.

"Think, girl," pleaded Miss Wharf, her face becoming red and wrinkled with the violence of her passion, "there are other men who love you. Young Walker would make you a good husband, and Lady Jabe is most anxious for the match."

"I like Chris," said Olivia, "and I have known him all my life. But I can't marry him. I want a master when I marry."

"Then take Clarence Burgh," said Miss Wharf, "he will be your master."

"No. He's a brute."

"He's a man—much more of a man than Rupert Ainsleigh."

"I deny that," said Olivia fiercely.

"He is. Clarence has been all over the world. He has fought everywhere—"

"So has Major Tidman. Do you advise me to marry him?"

"He would make you a better husband than Rupert, old as he is. That young Ainsleigh is a dreamer. He is on the point of losing his estates, yet he sits at Royabay doing nothing."

"He intends to do something and save the estates."

"Never. He is not the sort of man to work. Olivia, if you will take Chris Walker or Clarence Burgh for your husband I shall leave you five hundred a year. If you refuse I give you nothing."

"I prefer nothing—and Rupert."

"Then you shall not have him. I'll ruin him first."

Olivia started. "You can't ruin him. You talk wildly."

"Oh, do I?" sneered Miss Wharf; "that shows you know little of me or of my business. Listen. I bought up a mortgage on the Royabay estate. It cost me money which I could ill afford to pay away. But I bought it so as to ruin the son of that woman Vane who took Markham from me. I always intended to buy the estate, or at least to drive Rupert from the place; but if you will give him up I shall forego my revenge. Now what do you say?"

"Nothing," faltered Olivia, who had turned very pale. "I don't know what to say."

"Will you give the man up?"

"I won't see him, if that will please you."

"No. It doesn't please me. You must give him up, and engage yourself to Mr. Walker or to Mr. Burgh."

"I cannot—I cannot," said poor Olivia.

Miss Wharf stamped her foot and bit her lip. "You are as obstinate as your mother was before you," she said savagely. "I shall give you one month to make up your mind, and that is very generous of me. If you surrender Rupert and choose one of the other two, I will not foreclose the mortgage, and will leave you five hundred a year."

"When can you foreclose?" asked Olivia anxiously.

"By the end of the year. So it rests with you, if Rupert

Ainsleigh leaves his home in six months or keeps it. Now you can go."

Olivia Rayner was not a girl who would stand dictation. But for some reason or another she meekly bowed her head and went out, leaving Miss Wharf to calm down over her needle-work.

The girl went to her own room, and lay down to think over the situation. What she thought or what plan she conceived it is difficult to say; but she came down to dinner quite composed. Her aunt looked at her sharply, and Miss Pewsey with suspicion, but neither of them made any remark bearing on the storm. On the contrary, Miss Wharf chatted about the ball and talked of her dress and even advised Olivia about her costume. "You will look very well in white," said Miss Wharf.

"But not so lovely as my Sophia in pale blue," said Miss Pewsey with her usual emphasis. "I know you will be the belle of the ball, darling Sophia."

"I have been the belle of several balls in my time," said Miss Wharf good-humoredly.

"And will be still," purred Miss Pewsey, like the cat she was; "my dear nephew said you were a rattling fine woman."

"It sounds like one of Mr. Burgh's speeches," said Olivia with great contempt. She knew that the buccaneer loved her, and therefore disliked him the more.

"Oh, Olivia, how can you," cried the little old maid, throwing up her hands, "when poor, dear, darling Clarence worships the ground you walk on! He's got money, too, and wants a wife!"

"Let him marry Lotty Dean, then."

"That retired grocer's daughter!" cried Miss Pewsey,

drawing herself up, "no, indeed. I may be poor, but I am of gentle blood, Olivia. The Pewseys have been in Essex for generations. My papa was rich and could afford to send me to a fashionable school where I met my own Sophia. But poor sweet papa lost his money and then—oh, dear me!" Miss Pewsey squeezed out a tear. "What sad times I have had!"

"You're all right now, Lavinia," said Miss Wharf stolidly, eating fruit and sipping port wine.

"Yes, dearest Sophia, thanks to your large and generous heart. I have no one in the world but you and Clarence. He is the son of my only sister, and has travelled—"

"In China," said Olivia.

Miss Pewsey narrowed her eyes and looked as though about to scratch.

"In China, of course. But why do you make that remark, Olivia?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "I observed that Mr. Burgh has not very pleasant recollections of China," she said deliberately; "he was not pleased to find that Mr. Walker could talk the language, and he was uncomfortable when the name Tung-Yu was mentioned."

Miss Pewsey bit her lip. "Do you know anything of Tung-Yu?"

"No. Why should I? All I know is that Chris Walker says he will bring the man down here for the ball."

The little old maid looked hard at the girl, but Olivia bore her scrutiny composedly. She wondered why Miss Pewsey stared so hard, and laid such emphasis on the Chinese name, but the matter slipped from her mind when she retired to her room. She would have wondered still

more had she known that Miss Pewsey came up the stairs and listened at the door of the bedroom.

Olivia had arranged to meet Rupert near the band-stand, as their meetings were secret because of Miss Wharf's dislike. Certainly the young man had come to the house, and Miss Wharf had received him with cold dignity; but when he showed a marked preference for Olivia's company, she gave him to understand that she did not approve. Henceforth Rupert stopped away from Ivy Lodge, and met Olivia at intervals near the band-stand. So Olivia, putting on a dark dress and a veil, slipped out of the house, and took her way along the brilliantly lighted front. She had often gone before, and always had left her aunt and Miss Pewsey sitting in the drawing-room, Miss Wharf working and the companion reading the newspaper. Miss Wharf never by any chance looked at a newspaper herself, but left it to Miss Pewsey to cull the choice news for her delectation.

So Olivia, feeling quite safe, stepped lightly along to where the crowd gathered round the stand. It was a perfect night and very warm, therefore many people were seated in the chairs and strolling across the grass. Olivia went to a certain corner, and, as she expected, found her lover. He was not in evening-dress, but for the sake of the meeting had assumed a dark serge suit. As she advanced he recognized her and came forward, taking off his hat. Then he gave her his arm and the two strolled to the far end of the green, where they sat down under the fence which was round the flag-staff. There, removed from every one, they could talk in moderately loud tones.

"My darling," said Rupert, possessing himself of

Olivia's hand. "I thought you would not come. You were late."

"I could not get away before. Miss Pewsey watches me like a cat does a mouse, and with the same disposition to pounce, I expect."

"She's a detestable woman," said Rupert angrily; "why can't she leave you alone?"

"I don't know. Rupert, she wants me to marry her nephew."

"What, that bounder who rides so furiously!" cried Rupert fiercely; "you don't mean to say that he dares—"

"Not in words, but he looks—oh!" Olivia shivered, "you know the sort of look a man like that, gives you."

"I'll twist his neck if he insults you."

"Then Miss Pewsey would complain to my aunt and I should get into trouble. Oh, Rupert," she said softly, "I am so afraid."

"Of that man? Nonsense."

"No—of everything. I can keep Mr. Burgh off—"

"Who is he?" asked Rupert jealously.

"Miss Pewsey's nephew. I can manage him, bold as he is. But it is you I am afraid of. Listen," and Olivia told the young man what she had learned from Miss Wharf that afternoon. "She can ruin you," said the poor girl, almost crying, "and she will if she learns the truth."

Rupert pressed the hand he held. "Why not tell her the truth?" he said. "I'm willing to face poverty if you are."

"Rupert, are you mad? If Aunt Sophia learned that we were married—hark, what was that?" and Olivia rose, and nervously peered into the shadows. "I thought I heard a noise."

"It's nothing. Only some rats in the long grass within

the fence. No one's about. They're all over at the band. But about our marriage, Olivia. Miss Wharf must learn sooner or later."

"Yes. But you know I asked you to keep it quiet, that I might not have trouble with her. It was selfish of me, for it would have been braver of me to have faced her anger and then have told all the world that we were married at that Registry Office. But I'm glad now I didn't. She would have ruined you."

"She can't do anything till the end of the year."

"But why didn't you tell me she held this mortgage?"

"Well, I thought that before the end of the year I might manage to pay it and the other mortgages off. Then we could announce that we were married, and live at Royabay on what small income I have."

"I don't mind about the income," said Mrs. Ainsleigh, for that Olivia secretly was. "I'd live on a shilling a day with you, darling. But aunt threatens if I marry you, to cut me out of her will. She would do so at once if she knew the truth, and leave the money to Miss Pewsey."

"Let her. I dare say that old maid has schemed for it. She's a wicked old woman that and worthy of her bounder of a nephew. Never mind about the money or the mortgage. Let us announce the marriage. I don't like the position you occupy. It is not fit that my wife should be exposed to the attentions of a cad like this Burgh."

"Wait till the end of the year," said Olivia feverishly; "then you may be able to get money to put things straight. It is best to keep the matter quiet now. Oh, how I wish we had money, Rupert!"

"I may be able to make it out of the fan."

"What fan?" asked Olivia, looking at him.

Rupert laughed. "I forgot you don't know." He took the slip of paper from his pocket-book and lighting a match he read the description of the fan. "I went up to the place," he continued, dropping the lucifer, "and saw a Chinaman, Tung-Yu—"

"What!" said Olivia starting; "why that is the man Mr. Walker is going to bring to the ball. He's a clerk in the firm of Kum-gum Li and Company."

"That's strange. I thought he was the keeper of the Joss house in Perry Street, Whitechapel. Humph! Does Walker know of the fan?"

"I don't know. But he knows this Tung-Yu, and I think so does Mr. Burgh. He seemed much annoyed when he heard the name."

"What about?"

"I can't say. And, Rupert, Mr. Burgh speaks Chinese—"

"He must be very clever, then, for I hear it is a most awful language to get hold of. Was Burgh ever in China?"

"Yes. He brought the fan from that place."

"Fan?" Rupert turned round sharply, "what fan?"

"The one you talk about," said Olivia innocently. "I recognized it at once from the description you read just now."

"Are you sure?" said Rupert, much excited, for he never expected to hear of the missing fan from Olivia of all people.

"Quite sure—positive. The fan is painted green on one side, and the sticks on the other are overlaid with thin jade, so I suppose it gets its name from the mineral. Then it has a cord of yellow silk with four beads and half a bead, and—"

"It is the same. Where did Burgh get it?"

"I don't know. He says he brought it from China, and offered it to me. I refused it—"

"I should think so," said Ainsleigh fuming; "well?"

"Then he gave it to my aunt."

"And has Miss Wharf got it now?"

"I think so, but I have not seen it lately. I expect if she has, she will use it at the ball."

"And Tung-Yu who advertises is coming to the ball," mused Rupert; "there doesn't seem much chance for me. I expect your aunt will make the money, after all."

"It won't be much. Who would give a large sum for that fan?"

"Tung-Yu will. He is ready to give five thousand pounds."

"Oh!" said Olivia with real regret, "and I refused it."

"I'm glad you did," cried Rupert angrily. "I would rather everything went than that you should accept presents from that bounder. Well, I fear my chance is gone, Olivia. I'm ruined."

"Dearest, I will face the ruin with you," and in the shadows they kissed.

CHAPTER V.

CONCERNING THE FAN.

RUPERT returned to Royabay in rather a melancholy frame of mind. He found himself in a very difficult situation, and there did not seem to be any chance of his extricating himself therefrom, now that Miss Wharf possessed the fan. It was strange that she should have received it from Clarence Burgh, and Rupert wondered how that dashing young gentleman became its owner. However, there was little use speculating on this. Miss Wharf had the fan and probably she would keep it, unless the large sum of money offered by Tung-Yu tempted her to do business. Ainsleigh wondered also if the old maid had read the papers, and if she had seen the advertisement.

"But what does it matter to me?" said Rupert, as he turned up the avenue. "I won't get the money, and Miss Wharf will see me hanged first before she will let me make such a sum. While I am poor she holds me in her clutches, and thinks by means of that mortgage to prevent my marriage with Olivia. What would she say if she knew that we were already married? I was wrong to consent to keep the affair secret, even though Olivia wished it. In any case Miss Wharf can do nothing, till the end of the year, and the truth is bound to come to her ears sooner or later. Then she will strike and spare not. I believe that's the motto of the Wharfs, and it fits her spiteful temper excellently."

Then Rupert went on to reflect on what Olivia had told

him of Aunt Sophia's romance with Markham Ainsleigh. The young man had never heard of it before, as he knew little of his father, who had gone to China, a few years after his heir was born. In fact, Markham only waited till there was a male Ainsleigh to carry on the succession and to inherit what remained of the estates, and then steamed to the Far East to seek fortune. But fortune had proved unkind and the poor man had died—whether of dysentery or by violence it is difficult to say. Some people said one thing and some another, but even Rupert did not know the truth. Dr. Forge, who had worked the mine in the Kan-Su province along with Markham, knew the absolute truth, and he ascribed the death to dysentery; so Rupert, for the time being at all events, was willing to accept this explanation. He had no reason to doubt the loyalty of Theophilus Forge, who had been a college chum of his father's.

Thinking in this way and considering whether it would not be advisable to proclaim his marriage so as to release his wife from the odious attentions of Clarence Burgh, the young man arrived at the house. He was met in the hall by Mrs. Pettley, who announced that Major Tidman was waiting to see her young master. Rupert nodded in an absent-minded way and was going to the library, where the Major was kicking his heels, when Mrs. Pettley caught him by the arm. "It's walking again," said Mrs. Pettley, whose fat face was pale, "and say what you like, Master Rupert, trouble is coming."

She was a stout old dame with a red face suggestive of drink, a most unfair thing to be said of her as she drank nothing stronger than gin and water, one tumbler a night before retiring. But Mrs. Pettley had been a cook in her

early days; later on she assumed the position of Rupert's nurse, and finally, having married Pettley the butler, she became housekeeper of Royabay. She was a common, vulgar old woman, but loyal to the core, and adored Rupert. When he had to dismiss the greater part of his servants he retained John Pettley and John Pettley's wife, who continued to serve him faithfully and always hoped for better days. Mrs. Pettley, being intensely superstitious, was always influenced by the appearance of Abbot Raoul, whose walking was supposed to predict bad luck to the Ainsleighs. If the ghost did not appear Mrs. Pettley was happy, but when it did she always prognosticated evil. And it must be admitted that Rupert usually had more trouble with his creditors, when Abbot Raoul *did* visit his old haunts. He seemed to be a most malignant spirit. But Rupert as an educated man was not going to admit occult influence.

"Nonsense, Mrs. Pettley," said he, shaking her off; "so far as trouble is concerned Abbot Raoul might remain visible forever. Am I ever out of trouble?"

"No, that you ain't, worse luck. But this walking means something extra special as I said to John."

"Where did you see the old beast?—I mean Abbot Raoul, of course."

Mrs. Pettley started, "Hush, deary," she whispered, looking round in a fearful manner; "don't speak evil of speerits. It may be round, and you might anger It. I saw It in the cloisters."

"Near the place?" asked Rupert.

"Ay, standing on the black square where Its mortal body was burnt, poor soul. It was pinting to a tree."

"To what tree? There are plenty in the cloisters."

"To the copper beech, as you might say, Master Rupert. And angry enough he looked. I nearly fainted."

"You should be used to the ghost by this time, Mrs. Pettley."

"Ghosts is things, custom won't help you with," said Mrs. Pettley mysteriously. "They freeze your blood every time. Just as I was thinking of a good scream and a faint it vanished."

"Into thin air, like the witches in 'Macbeth,'" said Rupert lightly. "Well, it doesn't need Abbot Raoul to come and tell me trouble is near. I'm likely to have a good deal by the end of the year."

"Oh, Master Rupert, what is it?" gasped the old woman.

"Nothing I can tell you at present," said Ainsleigh carelessly. "I have a good mind to seek Abbot Raoul myself and see if he can't help me; but I'm not psychic as you are, Mrs. Pettley. I see nothing."

"And a good thing, too," said the ex-cook solemnly; "if It spoke to you it would be to make matters worse, though worse they can't be."

"Oh, yes, they can," said Rupert grimly. "I may have to leave —"

"Never!" cried Mrs. Pettley, smiting her fat hands together. "Royabay can never do without an Ainsleigh within its walls."

"It will have to content itself with Abbot Raoul, and I hope he'll jolly well frighten the creditors."

"Drat them!" said Mrs. Pettley vigorously; "but, Master Rupert, why did It pint to the copper beech?"

"I can't say. Ask It when next you see It. But I must go to Major Tidman. He'll be angry if I keep him."

Mrs. Pettley tossed her head and snorted. "The idear of old Farmer Tidman's son being angry with the likes of you, Master Rupert. I mind him when he was a brat of a lad and—"

"Yes—yes—but I must go," said Ainsleigh rather impatiently, and left Mrs. Pettley talking to the air.

Major Tidman, whose ears must have burnt at the thoughts which occupied Mrs. Pettley's brain, was seated in the most comfortable arm-chair he could find, and smoked a good cigar. He had a bottle of port and a glass before him, and apparently had made himself at home while waiting.

"Hope you don't mind my making free with the wine-list," said Tidman, who looked rather uneasy as he rose. "I've waited two hours."

"What about?" said Rupert, throwing his cap down and sinking wearily into a near chair; "anything wrong?"

"I am," said the Major, "all wrong, my dear boy. You see in me a beast and a false friend."

"Indeed! How do you make that out?"

"I have been concealing things from you," said the Major ruefully, "and all to make money. I'm really getting avaricious, Ainsleigh," added the Major desperately, "and it's spoiling my character."

"Well," said Rupert, filling his pipe, and wondering what this outburst meant; "Byron says that avarice is a fine old gentlemanly vice. If you have only that fault to blame yourself for, you are very lucky."

"But I should have told you about the fan."

Rupert blew out the match he had just lighted and sat up. "What's that about the fan?" he asked sharply.

"I know something about it," said Tidman, fortifying his

courage with a glass of wine, "and I should have spoken the other evening after dinner when you read that advertisement. But I thought I'd get the fan myself and secure the five thousand pounds—though to be sure I didn't know what that Tung-Yu would pay for it at the time."

"No," said Rupert dryly, "I told you that later. Well, Major, you haven't treated me quite on the square, but I forgive you. I expect neither of us will make money out of that fan."

"No," said Tidman still more ruefully. "Forge has lost it."

Rupert looked puzzled. "Forge? What do you mean?"

"Oh, this is part of my confession of trickery," said the Major, rubbing his bald head. "You see, Ainsleigh, I held my tongue when you read out about the fan, but I knew where it was all the time."

"And where was it?" asked the young man, staring.

"Forge has it—or rather Forge had it," said the Major, and he related his interview with the doctor when Rupert had departed. "So you see," added the Major sadly, "I'm punished for my wrong-doing. I'm very sorry, as I like you, Ainsleigh, and after all I'd be glad to see you make the money, though I'm not so well off myself as people think, and five thousand pounds would help me a lot. However, I hope you will think I have made amends for my momentary lapse from squareness by thus confessing."

"Oh, that's all right, Tidman. But treat me openly for the future. How did you know that Forge had had the fan?"

Rupert did not tell what he had heard from Olivia for the moment. He first wished to hear all that the Major

had to say. Tidman had certainly acted wrongly, as he should not have taken advantage of Rupert's confidence, but now he apparently wished to behave properly, and Ainsleigh put the Major's temporary deceit out of his mind.

"I gave Forge the fan," blurted out the Major.

"The deuce you did!" said Ainsleigh, looking puzzled. "And where did you get it?"

"In Canton seven years ago," confessed Tidman. "I was travelling there for my health, and I had an adventure."

"What was that?"

But Tidman did not seem inclined to speak out. "I'll tell you on another occasion," he said with a shudder; "it was not a very pleasant adventure, and Forge, who was in Canton at the time, got me out of it. I stuck to the fan, though."

"Oh, so the fan was the cause of the adventure?"

"Partly," admitted Tidman reluctantly. "I'll tell you later, as I say"; he wiped his forehead. "I can't tell you now, it's too awful. I got the fan, though, and Forge took a fancy to it. He asked me for it in Canton and I refused. He asked again in England and I gave it to him. He's had it all these seven years, locked up in that black japan cabinet with the gold figures—"

"I know. It's in that Chinese room of his. Well?"

"After you went away the other day I asked him to give me the fan back, as I wanted to get the money from Tung-Yu. Forge refused, as he said the fan has something to do with a secret—"

"Whose secret?"

"Lo-Keong's secret. He is the real owner of the fan,

you know. Forge seems to hate Lo-Keong, and said the fan would get him into trouble."

"But how—how?" asked Ainsleigh impatiently.

The Major wiped his face again. "I don't know—I can't say. But Forge said there was a secret connected with the fan—"

"You said that before," cried Rupert, becoming exasperated.

"I don't know what I am saying, and that's the truth," stammered Tidman, becoming hotter and redder. "But Forge said that if I found the secret he would give me the fan. He then opened the cabinet and found the fan was gone."

"What did he say?"

"He turned as white as a sheet, and said that his life was at stake."

Rupert rose to pace the room. The mystery of the fan piqued him. "I wonder what he meant by that?" he asked himself.

"Something horrid, if it has to do with the Chinese," said the Major; "you have no idea what brutes they are. But Forge thought that Mrs. Bressy, the old woman who looks after him, might have sneaked the fan, as she is fond of taking things and pawning them. But she swore she had never set eyes on it."

"Wasn't the cabinet locked?"

"Yes. That's the strange part, and Forge has the key on his watch-chain. The lock wasn't broken, and no other key would fit it, so how it was opened is a mystery. But the fan's gone."

"Quite so," said Rupert, facing the Major sharply, "and Miss Wharf has the very fan you speak of."

Tidman fell back in his chair and gasped till he was purple in the face. "Wh—a—a—t!" he drawled out. "Sophia Wharf?"

"Yes. Olivia told me, when I explained how I wished to find the fan and make money. It seems that young Burgh—"

"A detestable young cad," snapped Tidman.

"I agree with you. He dares to admire my—to admire Olivia," said Rupert, nearly letting his secret slip out, "and, to gain her good graces, he offered her this fan. She refused, and he then presented it to Miss Wharf, who took it and who has it now."

"Oh!" groaned the Major, "and it's worth five thousand. What luck some people have."

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. "The luck will not come our way," he replied carelessly, "and to tell you the truth, I don't much care. I expect Miss Wharf will sell the fan to Tung-Yu."

"But she doesn't know about his wishing to buy it?"

"She may have seen the advertisement, and you know Tung-Yu is coming to the ball at the Bristol."

Major Tidman rose like a jack-in-the-box. "Who says so?" he asked.

"Young Walker. Tung-Yu is not the keeper of the Whitechapel Joss house as I thought. He is a clerk in the firm of Kum-gum Li."

"Chris Walker also works for them," interpolated the Major.

"Certainly, and he is bringing Tung-Yu to the ball. I don't know why, and I don't much care," added Ainsleigh somewhat crossly. "I am about tired of this fan business. What will you do?"

Major Tidman buttoned his coat. "I'm going straight to Forge," he said, "and I shall tell him that young Burgh had the fan. I know how he got it."

"Do you, indeed?" said Rupert yawning.

"Yes. Miss Pewsey stole it from the cabinet."

"Nonsense. Why should she do that?"

"Because she's always about Forge's house. He told me that he might marry her—ugh!" the Major sneered, "fancy marrying that old cat!"

"Different people have different tastes," said Ainsleigh coolly, "but if Forge is going to marry Miss Pewsey all the more reason she should not steal the fan."

"But she did," insisted the Major. "I'm sure she stole it and gave it to that scamp of a nephew so that he might gain Miss Rayner's good-will. You see, Miss Pewsey would like to see Burgh married to Olivia, as she—Miss Pewsey, I mean—could then finger the five hundred a year Miss Wharf will leave her niece."

"He had better be certain that Olivia will inherit the money first," said Rupert grimly, thinking of the secret marriage, "and Miss Pewsey hates Olivia."

"She hates every one," said Tidman, shrugging his plump shoulders, "but she hasn't a penny to bless herself with, and when Miss Wharf dies she will be cast on the world. Even five hundred a year is a consideration to her, and if her nephew can secure that by marrying Olivia, why, all the better for Miss Pewsey."

But Rupert shook his head. "If Miss Pewsey had that scheme in her head, she would be more friendly with Olivia," he said, "and she can set her mind at rest: Burgh will not marry Olivia."

"He's a dangerous rival, Ainsleigh."

"Pooh! I can manage that young man and half a dozen like him. You don't think I'd give up the girl I love to any one, Tidman?"

"No," said the Major, looking at the frank brave face of his host, "but Burgh is unscrupulous, and will make mischief. However, perhaps Forge will deal with him for this fan business. When Forge learns that Miss Pewsey has stolen his fan, he won't marry her. I'll have the satisfaction of spoiling her plans, at all events."

"She seems to have a great many plans according to you," yawned Ainsleigh, "but frankly I think you have found a mare's nest. I don't believe anything will come of the matter. It's moonshine."

Tidman marched to the door. "We'll see," said he determinedly. "I believe trouble is coming to you through young Burgh," and he departed.

Rupert left alone lighted his pipe and thought of Mrs. Pettley's fancy concerning the ghost. "If this is the trouble," said he to himself, "I don't mind. Burgh won't get Olivia unless over my dead body. As to this fan—pah!"

But he little knew what disasters the fan would bring to him. Abbot Raoul's ghost was not walking for nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

BURGH'S STORY.

NEXT morning Major Tidman was seated in his well-furnished room in the Bristol Hotel. From the window he commanded a fine view of the mouth of the Thames, of the pier, and of the picturesque lower town. But the view did not gain the attention of the Major, worthy as it was of his notice. He seated himself at the table, which was spread for breakfast, and proceeded to make a good meal. Perhaps he did not eat so well as usual, for the Major was worried, as was evident from the cross expression of his face. On the previous night he had gone to see Forge, and had told him how Miss Wharf became possessed of the fan. The doctor had listened to him quietly, but had refrained from making any observation, even when Tidman reminded him of his remark, as to his life being at stake. The interview had on the whole been unsatisfactory, and Tidman was not at all pleased. He wished to learn the truth about the fan.

"There's some secret connected with it," muttered the Major, while he devoured buttered eggs rapidly, "and that secret means a lot of money. Five thousand pounds is worth having. I could buy that plot of waste land near the church and build an hotel there. I believe it would pay. Then there's Forge's life, which, as he says, hangs on the fan, though in what way I can't find out. If I got the fan, I might be able to get something out of him. I would make Forge and Tung-Yu bid against one another,

and perhaps I'd get even more than is offered. Ainsleigh can't say anything against me now, as I am acting quite square and above board. He's got no enterprise," thought the little man with some scorn, "or he'd get Olivia to take the fan from her aunt and make the money out of it. But if he won't I will, so I'll see Miss Wharf to-day and try what I can do. I dare say I'd get it from her for a five-pound note—that is, if she hasn't seen the advertisement. She's keen after money, too—as keen as I am. Humph," added Tidman, filling himself a second cup of coffee. "I wonder why Tung-Yu was such a fool as to tell Ainsleigh he was willing to give five thousand. Any one not knowing the value of the fan would get it cheap. There's a mystery about it, and the mystery means money. I must get to the bottom of the affair. Forge is no good, as he is holding his tongue; even when I told him that Miss Pewsey stole it, he did not seem to mind. But he'll never marry her after this, so I've spoilt her chance of marriage, the cat. Though why Forge should marry an old fiend who is eighty, if she's an hour, I can't make out. But Forge was always secretive," ended the Major in disgust, and reached for the *pâté-dé-foi-gras*.

His meal was interrupted by a smart young waiter, who intimated that a lady and gentleman wished to see the Major. Tidman was rather surprised at a call being paid at ten o'clock in the morning; but he was still more surprised when at the heels of the waiter appeared Miss Pewsey and Dr. Forge. The latter looked much his usual self, hungry, dismal, and like a bird of prey; but Miss Pewsey had a color in her cheeks and a fire in her black eyes, which made her look younger. It seemed that her errand was not a peaceful one.

"To what am I indebted—?" began the courtly Major, when the little old maid cut him short with vinegary politeness.

"Indebted!" she said, standing very straight and stiff, and quite ignoring the chair placed for her. "Oh, indeed, —how very polite we are! Judas!" she snapped out the word with flaming eyes. "Oh, Judas!"

"Really, Miss Pewsey—"

"You'd like to see me in the dock, would you?" cried Miss Pewsey, tossing her head and trembling with wrath. "I'm a thief, am I—oh, you military fat Judas!"

"Did you come here to insult me?" asked Tidman, growing purple.

"If you put it in that way, I did," sniffed the lady, "and also to ask plainly what you meant by stating to my promised husband here that I stole a fan from his cabinet?"

Tidman changed from purple to scarlet. He had not reckoned on the doctor speaking to Miss Pewsey, and he turned a look of reproach on his friend. The doctor immediately took up the challenge. "I see you think I have been too free with my tongue," said he deliberately; "it is not my custom, as you know. But I told you, Major, that I was engaged to Miss Pewsey, and I thought it only right that she should know the aspersions you have cast on her character."

"A character," cried the lady, "which has stood the test of years and which stands deservedly high. I am a Pewsey of Essex," she added, as though the whole county belonged to her, "and never before have I been accused of thieving—Judas," she shot out the name again, and the Major quailed. He saw that he was in the wrong, owing to Forge's betrayal, and had to make the best of it.

"I am extremely sorry," he said apologetically; "quite a mistake."

"Oh, indeed! A jury will give their opinion on that," sniffed the maiden.

"No! No, I beg of you—"

"The damages will be laid at five thousand pounds."

"The price of the fan," said Tidman, starting.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Miss Pewsey, her eyes glittering.

"I mean just nothing."

"Oh, yes, you do. Make a clean breast of it, Benjamin Tidman. Oh, to think that the son of a farmer, who was almost a laborer, should dare to speak evil of a Pewsey of Essex! But the law—the law," said the irate lady, shaking a thin finger, "and five thousand pounds."

"Get it out of the fan."

"Is it worth that?" asked Forge coldly.

"You heard what young Ainsleigh said," answered Tidman as coldly.

"Yes, I remember; but we have not come about the price, but about your libel on this lady."

"I apologize," said Tidman, seeing nothing else was to be done.

"Apology isn't money," snapped Miss Pewsey.

"Oh, if you want money, again I refer you to the fan."

The Major was getting angry. He didn't very much care if Miss Pewsey did bring an action at the moment, though with saner thoughts he would have been horrified at the idea. "I apologize," said he again, "but I was misled by Dr. Forge."

"How were you misled by me?" demanded Forge impassively.

"You said you had the fan in your cabinet, and that it had been stolen. Mrs. Bressy swore she did not take it, and I thought—"

"That I was the thief," cried Miss Pewsey shrilly; "oh, how clever of you—how very, very clever! You thought that I got the key from the watch-chain of Dr. Forge where he always carries it, to open the cabinet and steal a fan. I knew nothing about it. I never even knew of the existence of the fan—there, Judas!" snapped the lady once more.

"Then I was mistaken, and Dr. Forge was mistaken also."

"I confess that I did make a mistake," said the doctor with a sad face, "but that does not excuse your libelling the lady I hope to call my wife. My memory is not so good as it was, and I fear that the drugs I take to induce sleep have impaired what memory I have left. I suffer from neuralgia," added the doctor, turning to Miss Pewsey, "and in China I contracted the habit of opium smoking, so—"

"Marriage will put that right," said the lady, patting his hand. "I do not expect a perfect husband—"

"I never knew you expected a husband at all," said Tidman injudiciously.

"Ho!" cried Miss Pewsey, drawing herself up. She had been standing all the time; "another libel. I call Dr. Forge to witness it."

"I really think, Tidman, you'd better hold your tongue," said the doctor gently; "but I must explain that I quite forgot that I had parted with the fan. Yes. I received it from you seven years ago, when I brought you home after that adventure in Canton. Two years later I returned to China to see Lo-Keong on business, and I took the fan with me. He received it."

"No," said the Major, shaking his bald head; "I can't believe that, Forge. You declared that you hated Lo-Keong, and that the fan would harm you and him also."

"I do hate the man," cried Forge, looking more like a bird of prey than ever, "but I got a concession about a gold mine by giving back the fan. I wanted the money more than Lo-Keong's life. As to my own life, it was in danger from the enemies of the mandarin, who want the fan to ruin him. That was why I spoke as I did. Are you satisfied?"

"Not quite," said Tidman, who was puzzled; "how did the fan come to England again?"

"My nephew, Mr. Burgh, will tell you that," said Miss Pewsey, "when he has administered the beating I have asked him to inflict."

"Beating!" shouted the Major, snatching a knife from the breakfast table; "let that young whelp dare to hint such a thing, and I'll kick him round Marport."

"Clarence is not the man to be kicked."

"Nor am I the man to be beaten. I have apologized and that is quite enough. If you are not satisfied, Miss Pewsey, you can bring your action and I'll defend it. Beating indeed!" snorted Tidman; "I'd like to see any one who would dare to lay a hand on me," and he looked very fierce as he spoke.

"Very good," said Miss Pewsey in a stately manner; "if you will tell me all about the fan, I shall ask Clarence to spare you the beating."

"Clarence can go to ——" the Major mentioned a place which made Miss Pewsey shriek and clap her fingers to her ears. "I am not the least afraid of that cad and bounder—that—that—"

"Libel again, Major Tidman."

"Pooh—pooh!" said Forge rising; "let us go, Lavinia."

"Not till I hear about the fan. For the sake of my dear Sophia, who has the fan, I want to hear."

"All I know is, that the fan was advertised for—"

"I saw the advertisement," said Miss Pewsey, "but I said nothing to dear Sophia, although I recognized the fan from the description in the newspaper. She never looks at the papers, and trusts to me to tell her the news."

"So you kept from her a piece of news out of which she could make five thousand pounds."

"Really and truly," said Miss Pewsey, clutching her bag convulsively and with glittering eyes, "who says so—who pays it—who—?"

"One question at a time," interrupted Tidman, now quite master of himself. "Tung-Yu, the man Ainsleigh saw at the Joss house in Perry Street, Whitechapel, offered five thousand pounds for the return of the fan. Ainsleigh saw the advertisement and—"

"I know how he came to inquire about the fan," said Miss Pewsey; "Dr. Forge told me, but I did not know the amount offered."

"Will you tell Miss Wharf now?"

"No," said Miss Pewsey very decisively, "nor will any one else. My Sophia's health is delicate, and if she had a shock like that inflicted on her she would die."

"What, the offer of five thousand pounds—"

"The chance of being killed," said Miss Pewsey; "but I will leave my nephew, Mr. Burgh, to explain that, Major Tidman. I accept your apology for thinking me a—but no!" cried the lady; "I can't bring myself to pronounce the nasty word. I am a Pewsey of Essex. All is said in

that, I think. Good-morning, Major. My abstinence from bringing an action lies in the fact, that you will refrain from unsettling my Sophia's mind by telling about the fan. Good-morning. My Theophilus, will we not go?"

Before the Major could recover from the bewilderment into which he was thrown by this torrent of words Miss Pewsey, taking the arm of the melancholy doctor, had left the room. When alone Tidman scratched his chin and swore. "There's something in this," he soliloquized. "I believe the old woman wants to get the money herself. By George! I'll keep my eyes on her," and the Major shook his fist at the door through which the fairy form of Miss Pewsey had just vanished.

Later in the day Tidman, dressed to perfection, walked up the town twirling his stick, and beaming on every pretty woman he came across. The stout old boy was not at all appalled by the threat of Miss Pewsey regarding her buccaneering nephew's attentions. When he saw the gentleman in question bearing down on him, he simply stopped and grasped his stick more firmly. If there was to be a fight, the Major resolved to have the first blow. But Burgh did not seem ready to make a dash. He sauntered up to Tidman and looked at him smilingly. "Well met, old pard," said he, in his slangy fashion.

"My name to you is Major Tidman," said the old fellow coolly.

"I guess I know that much. Can't we go a stretch along the lower part of the town?"

"If there's any row to come off," said the Major, keeping a wary eye on the young man, "I prefer it to take place here. On guard, sir—on guard."

Clarence shrugged his shoulders and produced a cigar-

ette. "Oh, that's all right," said he, striking a match. "I guess my old aunt's been at you. I'm not going in for any row—not me."

"Just as well for you," said the Major sharply; "how dare you threaten me, you—you—"

"Now, I ask you," said Clarence, "if I have threatened you? Go slow. I guess the old girl's been piling on the agony. She's got old Forge to fight her battles. When I make trouble," added Clarence musingly, "it will be for a pretty girl like Olivia."

"You can have your desire for a row by telling that to young Ainsleigh."

"Huh!" said Burgh with contempt, "I guess I'd lay him out pretty smart. I tell you, Major, I'm dead gone on that girl; but she treats me like a lump of mud."

"And quite right, too," said Tidman coolly; "you aren't worthy of her. Now, Ainsleigh is."

Clarence pitched away his cigarette with an irritable gesture. "Don't get me riz," said he darkly, "or I'll make the hair fly with Ainsleigh."

"Pooh! He's quite able to look after himself."

"Can he shoot?" demanded the buccaneer.

"Yes. And use his fists, and fence, and lay you out properly. Confound you, sir, don't you think I've travelled also? I've been in the Naked Lands in my time, and have seen your sort growing on the banana plants. You're the sort to get lynched."

"Oh, tie it up!" said Burgh with sudden anger, for these remarks were not to his mind. "I want to tell you about the fan."

"Why do you want to talk of that?" asked Tidman with suspicion. "I don't care a straw for the fan."

"Oh, I reckon you do, Major. But you're well out of it. If you'd kept that fan there would have been trouble—yes, you may look, but if you'd held on to that article you'd have been a corpse by now."

Tidman sneered, not at all terrified by these vague threats. "What do you mean by this drivel?"

"Let's come to anchor here," said Clarence, pulling up beside a seat in a secluded part, near the old town beach. "I'll spin the yarn."

"About the fan?" said the Major, sitting promptly. "I confess I am curious to know how it came to England again, after Forge took it again to the Far East. Didn't he give it to Lo-Keong?"

"So he says," said Clarence, with a sidelong look at his companion. "I don't know myself. All I know is, that I got it from a pirate."

"From a pirate?"

"That's so. I was in Chinese waters a year or so ago, and I reckon pirates swarm in those parts—"

Tidman shivered. "Yes," he admitted; "I had an adventure myself in Canton with a pirate of sorts."

"Old Forge told me something about it," said Clarence, lighting a fresh cigarette, "but my yarn's different. I was out with some of the boys in Chinese waters, and a pirate tried to board us. We were down Borneo way, looking out for a ruby mine said to be in those parts. My pals—there were two of them, and myself engineering the job—hired a boat and cut across to Borneo. The pirates tried to slit our throats and our Chinese crew tried to help them. But we used our Winchesters and six-shooters freely, and shot a heap. The pirates cleared off and we brought our barky into port safe enough."

"But about the fan?"

"I'm coming to that. The Boss pirate was shot by me —a big six-foot Northern Chinee, got up to kill, like a tin god. He had this jade fan, and directed operations with it. When his pals cleared I found him as dead as a coffin and nailed the fan. It was pretty enough, but didn't appeal to me much. I clapped it away in my box, and when I reached England I offered it to Aunt Lavinia. She wants me to marry Miss Rayner, and said I should offer it to her, and cut out that aristocratic Ainsleigh chap. Olivia—ripping name, ain't it?—well, she didn't catch on, so I thought I'd gain the good-will of old Miss Wharf and passed it along to her."

The Major listened in silence to this story, which seemed reasonable enough. "Strange it should have come back to England, and to a small place like this, where Forge had it," he mused. "A coincidence, I suppose. By the way, did you see the advertisement?" he asked.

"You bet I did, and it made me sick to think I'd parted with the fan. Leastways it made me sick till I saw Hwei!"

"You mean Tung-Yu."

"No, I don't. I mean the Chinee as calls himself Hwei, who put that advertisement in every newspaper in London and the United Kingdom."

"What, in every one?" said the Major; "must have cost—"

"A heap, you bet, Major. Well, I struck Hwei—"

"That's the name of a river, man."

"Maybe; but it's what this Celestial calls himself. I struck him near the Mansion House, and knew him of old in Pekin, I reckon, where we chinchinned over some contraband biznai. I spoke to him in Chinese—I know

enough to get along on—and he told me he had come to this country about Lo-Keong's fan. I never said I'd got it, though by that time I'd seen the advertisement. I know Chinamen too well, to give myself away in that fashion. I pumped him, and learned that Hwei intended to scrag the chap who held the fan, so I concluded to lie low."

"But he offered wealth to whomsoever gave it up."

"Maybe. I don't know exactly how the thing figures out. I guess Hwei does the killing, and Tung-Yu the rewarding. But you can take it from me, Major, that unless Miss Wharf gets rid of that fan she'll have her throat cut. So I guess you must be glad you didn't handle the buznai," and Clarence puffed a serene cloud of smoke.

"It's more of a mystery than ever," said the Major. And so it was.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WARNING.

THE idea that the end of the year would see him ruined and homeless was terrible to Rupert. Even if his home had been an ordinary house, he would have been anxious; but when he thought of the venerable mansion, of the few acres remaining, of the once vast Ainsleigh estates, of the ruins of the Abbey which he loved, his heart was wrung with anguish. How could he let these things depart from him forever? Yet he saw no way out of the matter, although he had frequent consultations with his lawyers. One day, shortly before the ball at the Bristol, he returned from town with a melancholy face. Old Pettley ventured to follow his young master into the library, and found him with his face covered with his hands, in deep despair.

"Don't take on so, Master Rupert," said the old butler, gently; "things have not yet come to the worst."

"They are about as bad as they can be, John," replied Ainsleigh. "I have seen Mr. Thorp. It will take thirty thousand pounds to put matters right. And where am I to get it? Oh!" the young man started up and walked to and fro, "why didn't I go into the law, or take to some profession where I might make money? Forge was my guardian; he should have seen to it."

"Master Rupert," said the old butler, "do you think that gentleman is your friend?"

"What makes you think he isn't, John?"

Pettley pinched his chin between a shaky finger and

thumb. "He don't seem like a friend," said he in his quavering voice. "He didn't tell you or me, Master Rupert, how bad things were. When you was at college he should have told you, and then you might have learned some way of getting money."

"My father trusted him, John. He was appointed my guardian by the will my father made before he left for China."

"And Dr. Forge went with the master to China," said the old man; "how did the master die?"

"Of dysentery, so Dr. Forge says."

"And others say he was murdered."

"Who says so, John?"

"Well, sir, that Mandarin gentleman sent your father's papers and luggage back here when your mother was alive. A Chinaman brought the things. He hinted that all was not right, and afterward the mistress died. She believed your father was murdered."

Rupert looked pensive. He had heard something of this, but the story had been so vague and was so vague as John told it, that he did not believe in it much. "Does Dr. Forge know the truth?" he asked.

"He ought to, sir. Dr. Forge came from China with a report of this gold mine up in Kan-Su, and your father was all on fire to go there and make money. The mistress implored him not to go, but he would. He went with Dr. Forge, and never returned. The doctor, I know, says that the master died of dysentery when the doctor himself was at Pekin. But I never liked that Forge," cried the old servant vehemently, "and I believe there's something black about the business."

"But why should Forge be an enemy of my father's?"

"Ah, sir," Pettley shook his old head, "I can't rightly say. Those two were at college together and fast friends; but I never liked Forge. No, sir, not if I was killed for it would I ever like that gentleman, though it's not for a person in my position to speak so. I asked the doctor again and again to let me know how bad things were when you were at school, Master Rupert, but he told me to mind my own business. As if it wasn't my business to see after the family I'd been bred up in since fifteen years of age."

"I'll have a talk with Dr. Forge," said Rupert, after a pause; "if there is any question of my father having been murdered, I'll see if he knows." He turned and looked on the old man quickly. "You don't suppose, John, that if there was a murder, he—"

"No, no!" cried Pettley hurriedly, "I don't say he had to do with it. But that Mandarin—"

"Lo-Keong. Why, Forge hates him."

"So he says. But this Mandarin, as I've heard from the Major, is high in favor with the Chinaman's court. If the doctor was his enemy, he could not go so often to China as he does. And since your father's death fifteen years ago, he's been back several times."

"Well, I'll speak to him, John."

"And about the money, sir?"

Rupert sat down again. "I don't know what to do," he groaned. "I can manage to stave off many of the creditors, but if Miss Wharf forecloses the mortgage at Christmas every one will come down with a rush, and I'll have to give up Royabay to the creditors."

"Never—never—that will never be," said John fiercely. "Why, the place has been under the Ainsleighs for over three hundred years."

"I don't think that matters to the creditors," said Rupert, wincing; "if I could only raise this thirty thousand and get the land clear I would be able to live fairly well. There wouldn't be much; still I could keep the Abbey and we could live quietly."

"*We*, sir?" asked the old man, raising his head.

Rupert flushed, seeing he had made a slip. He did not want to tell the old man that he was married, as he was fearful lest the news should come to Miss Wharf's ears and render his wife's position with that lady unbearable. "I might get married, you know," he said in an evasive way.

"Lord, sir!" cried Pettley in terror, "whatever you do, don't cumber yourself with a wife till you put things straight."

"Heaven only knows how I am to put them straight," sighed Rupert. "I say, John, send me in some tea. I'm quite weary. Thorp is coming to see me next week and we'll have a talk."

"With Dr. Forge, I hope," said old John, as he withdrew.

Ainsleigh frowned when the door closed. Pettley certainly seemed possessed by the idea that Forge was an enemy of the Ainsleighs, yet Rupert could think of no reason why he should be. He had been an excellent guardian to the boy, and if he had not told him the full extent of the ruin till it was too late to prevent it, he might have done so out of pity, so that the lad's young years might be unclouded. "Still, it would have been better had he been less tender of my feelings and more considerate for my position," thought Rupert, as he paced the long room.

While he was sadly looking out of the window and

thinking of the wrench it would be to leave the old place, he saw a tall woman walking up the avenue. The eyes of love are keen, and Rupert with a thrill of joy recognized the stately gait of Olivia. With an ejaculation of delight he ran out, nearly upsetting Mrs. Pettley, who was coming into the library with a dainty tea. Disregarding her exclamation of astonishment, Rupert sprang out of the door and down the steps. He met Olivia half way near the ruins of the Abbey. "My dearest," he said, stretching out both hands, "how good of you to come!" Olivia, who looked pale, allowed him to take her hands passively. "I want to speak to you," she said quickly; "come into the Abbey," and she drew him toward the ruins.

"No, no!" said her husband; "enter your own house and have a cup of tea. It is just ready and will do you good."

"Not just now, Rupert," she replied, laying a detaining hand on his arm. "I can wait only for a quarter of an hour. I must get back."

Rupert grumbled at the short time, but, resolved to make the most of it, he walked with her into the cloisters. These were small, but the ruins were very beautiful. Rows of delicately carved pillars surrounded a grassy sward. At the far end were the ruins of the church stretching into the pines. The roofless fane looked venerable even in the bright sunshine. The walls were overgrown with ivy, and some of the images over the door still remained, though much defaced by Time. The windows were without the painted glass which had once filled them, but were rich with elaborate stone work. This was especially fine in the round window over the altar. As in the cloisters, the body of the church was overgrown with grass and some of the

pillars had fallen. The lovers did not venture into the ruined church itself, but walked round the pavement of the cloisters, under the arches. Doubtless in days of old many a venerable father walked on that paved way. But the monks were gone, the shrine was in ruins, and these lovers of a younger generation paced the quiet cloisters talking of love.

"My darling," said the young husband fondly, "how pale you are. I hope nothing is wrong."

"My aunt is ill. Oh, it's nothing—only a feverish cold. She hopes to be well enough to attend the ball to-morrow night."

"I did not hear of it," said Rupert, "though Tidman generally tells me the news. I have been in London for the last few days."

"So I see," said Olivia, and glanced at her fair, stalwart husband in his frock coat and smart Bond Street kit; "how well you look."

Rupert appreciated the compliment and taking her hands kissed both several times. Olivia bent forward and pressed a kiss on his smooth hair. Then she withdrew her hands. "We must talk sense," she said severely.

"Oh," said Rupert, making a wry face, "not about your aunt?"

"Yes. I can't understand her. She has shut herself up in her room and refuses to see me. She will admit no one but Miss Pewsey."

Ainsleigh shrugged his shoulders. "What does it matter?" he said; "you know Miss Wharf never liked you. You are much too handsome, my own. And that is the reason also for Miss Pewsey's dislike."

"Oh, Miss Pewsey is more amiable," said Olivia; "in-

deed, I never knew her to be so amiable. She is always chatting to me at such times as she can be spared from my aunt's room."

"Well, what is worrying you?"

"This exclusion from Aunt Sophia's room," said Olivia, with tears of vexation in her dark eyes. "I am her only relative—or at all events I am her nearest. It seems hard that she should exclude me, and admit Miss Pewsey, who is only a paid companion."

"I don't think it matters a bit," said Rupert; "hasn't your aunt seen any one lately?"

"No,—yes, by the way. She has seen her lawyer several times."

"I expect she is altering her will."

Olivia laughed. "She threatens to do so in favor of Miss Pewsey, unless by the end of the month I give you up, and engage myself either to Mr. Walker or to Mr. Burgh."

Rupert grew very angry. "What a detestable woman!" he exclaimed. "I beg your pardon, dear, I forgot she's your aunt. But what right has she to order you about like this? You are of age."

"And I am married, though she doesn't know it. But I'll tell you the real reason I am vexed I can't see my aunt. Can't we sit down?"

"Over there," said Ainsleigh, pointing to a secluded seat.

It was placed at the far end of the cloisters under a large oak. There were four oaks here or, to be more correct, three oaks and the stump of one. "That was destroyed by lightning when I was born," said Rupert, seeing Olivia's eyes fixed on this. "Mrs. Pettley saw in it an omen that I

would be unlucky. But am I?" and he fell to kissing his wife's hands again.

"Really, Rupert, you must be more sensible," she said, in pretended vexation. "What a pretty tree that copper beech is."

"Yes! But do you see the blackened square?"

"It is not so very black," said Mrs. Ainsleigh, pausing to dig the point of her umbrella into the ground, "there's hardly any grass on it, and the earth is dark and hard. Curious it should be so, seeing the grass is thick and green all round. I suppose this is where Abbot Raoul was burnt."

"Yes. I've told you the story and shown you the spot many times," said Rupert, slipping his arm round her waist.

"Dearest," she whispered, "I was too much in love to hear what you said on that point. And remember, all my visits to the Abbey have been secret ones. My aunt would be furious did she know that I had been here, and I often wonder that Pewsey, who is always watching me, has not followed me here."

"If she does, I'll duck her in the pond for a witch," said Rupert, and drew his wife to the seat under the oak; "well, go on."

"About my aunt. Oh, it's what Major Tidman told me. He's been trying to see Aunt Sophia also. Have you heard what Mr. Burgh told the Major about that horrid fan?"

"No. You forget, I have just returned from town. What is it?"

Olivia related to Rupert the story which Clarence had told the Major. "So you see," she ended, "this man

Hwei wants to kill any one who has the fan, and Tung-Yu desires to reward the person who brings it back."

"It seems contradictory," said Ainsleigh thoughtfully, "and if Hwei put in the advertisement it is strange that Tung-Yu should have received me in the Joss house mentioned in the paper. Well?"

"Well," said Olivia, rather vexed, "can't you see? I want my aunt to know that she is in danger and get rid of that horrid fan."

"Pooh!" said her husband, laughing, "there's no danger. Hwei can't kill an old lady like that for the sake of a fan she would probably sell for five shillings."

"She wouldn't," said Olivia, with conviction. "Aunt Sophia has taken quite a fancy to that fan. But she ought to be told how dangerous it is, Rupert."

"Or how lucky," said Ainsleigh; "let her sell the fan to Tung-Yu for five thousand pounds and then she can let Hwei kill Tung-Yu."

"But would he do so?"

"I can't say. On the face of it, it looks as though these two were working against one another, seeing they propose to reward the owner of the fan in such different ways. Yet Hwei, according to Burgh, put the advertisement in, and Tung-Yu received me. I don't understand."

"Well, don't you think I should tell the whole story to my aunt?"

"Yes. Go in and see her."

"Miss Pewsey won't let me, and my aunt refuses to admit me. I sent in a note the other day saying that I wished to speak very particularly, and she sent out another note to say that she would not see any one till she was well. The

note was kind enough in Aunt Sophia's cold way, but you see—"

"Yes! Yes! Well, then, let Tidman see her."

"Rupert, how annoying you are! She won't see any one but Miss—"

"Miss Pewsey. Well, then, tell her the story, and she can repeat it to your aunt. Though, by the way," added Ainsleigh, "Burgh may have told Miss Pewsey about it already."

"Yes," said Olivia, her face brightening, and rising to go away, "but I'll ask Miss Pewsey to tell Aunt Sophia herself."

As they walked toward the ruined entrance, Mrs. Pettley's bulky form appeared in the archway. She threw up her hands. "Sakes alive, Master Rupert, come off Abbot Raoul's burning-place."

Ainsleigh, who was standing on the square of blackened ground, obeyed at once, and drew Olivia away also. "I forgot," he murmured.

"Forgot what?" asked Olivia.

"Why, miss," said the old housekeeper, "don't you know it's said that if an Ainsleigh stands there some trouble will befall him before the year's end? You're not an Ainsleigh, miss, but Master Rupert—well, there—oh, sir, how can you be so foolish? The tea's ready, sir," and Mrs. Pettley with this prosaic ending trotted away.

"She doesn't know that you are an Ainsleigh," said Rupert, kissing his wife; "pah! Don't think of that foolish superstition. Come to—"

"No, Rupert," said Olivia, planting herself firmly against the wall, "you know I said a quarter of an hour. It's half an hour we have been talking. I must get back."

The young husband urged, implored, scolded, cajoled, but all to no effect. Olivia made up her mind to go, and go she did, Rupert escorting her to the gates. "You are very unkind," he said.

"I am very sensible," she replied. "I don't want to disturb my new relations with Miss Pewsey. She has such power over my aunt that it is necessary I should keep on good terms with her. Now, Rupert, you must not come any further."

"Just along the road."

"Certainly not. All the gossips of Marport would talk. Good-bye. I won't be kissed again. Some one may be looking."

Ainsleigh muttered a blessing on any one who might be about, and shook hands with his wife just as though they were strangers. Then he remained at the gate till she turned the corner. There, she looked back and Rupert threw her a kiss. Olivia shook a furious sunshade at him for the indiscretion.

"The silly boy," she said to herself as she went along, "if any one saw him, there would be a fine story all over Marport."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BALL.

So this was the position of affairs immediately before the ball given by the Glorious Golfers at the Bristol Hotel. Miss Wharf possessed the fan, and two Chinamen were searching for it. Hwei intended to secure it by murder, and Tung-Yu by the milder means of honorable purchase; but why the two, with such contradictory intentions, should work in unison, as appeared from the advertisement, Rupert could not understand. However, he had so much trouble himself that he dismissed the matter from his mind.

There was little chance of his benefiting by money from the one Chinaman, or of being murdered by the other. And he presumed that Olivia would instruct Miss Pewsey to tell Miss Wharf about the fan, even if she did not see her personally. And while Miss Wharf was ill and safe in her house, Hwei could not get at her in any way. Moreover, as Burgh, in his interview with Hwei near the Mansion House, had held his tongue, the man would not know where the fan was.

The ball was the best of the Marport season, as the Glorious Golfers were a body of young men with plenty of money and a great love of amusement.

The vast apartments of the Bristol were thrown open, and decked with flowers; an Irish band—The Paddies, —was engaged from London, and many people came down from the great city to be present.

It was a perfect night when the ball was held, and the terrace on the first floor of the hotel, or to speak more properly the balcony, was thronged with people.

It looked very pretty, as it was filled with tropical ferns and plants and trees, illuminated with Chinese lanterns, and made comfortable with numerous arm-chairs and plenty of small marble-topped tables.

Between the dances people, finding the rooms too warm, came out to walk in the night air. There was no moon, but the night was starry and warm, and a soft luminous light was reflected on sea and land. Standing under the great fern-trees and amidst the fairy lights the guests could survey with pleasure the vast waste of water stretching toward the clear horizon, and see the long pier glittering with innumerable lights. Needless to say, the terrace was much frequented by amorous couples.

Within, the ball-room, gay with flowers and draperies, with a waxed floor and many electric lights in colored globes, looked very pretty. The band was hidden behind a lofty floral screen, and played the latest seductive waltzes, interspersed with inspiriting barn-dances and quaint cake-walks. The women were lovely and the dresses perfect, so the young men enjoyed themselves not a little. Rupert was present, looking handsome in his evening dress, but rather flushed and anxious. He was not sure if Miss Wharf would come, in which case Olivia would not be present. And, if the old maid did recover sufficiently to make her appearance, she would perhaps refuse to allow him to dance with the girl.

However, Miss Wharf did appear, though at a somewhat late hour. She was gowned in pale blue and looked very handsome, if somewhat stout. Olivia's dark beauty

revealed itself in a primrose-hued dress, and Miss Pewsey looked more like a witch than ever in a black frock glittering with jet. This was the gift of Miss Wharf, as poor Miss Pewsey would never have been able to indulge in such extravagance. At the back and in attendance on the Ivy Lodge party, were Clarence Burgh and Dr. Forge. The buccaneer looked picturesque and dashing as usual and was dressed very quietly for one of his flamboyant tastes, though he showed to disadvantage beside the perfection of Rupert's garb. Forge wore a suit which might have been made for his grandfather, and which fitted his lank form ill. The doctor looked less his cool self than was usually the case. His parchment face was flushed and his melancholy eyes glittered as they roved round the brilliant room. Rupert wondered if he was looking for Tung-Yu, and glanced round the room himself to see if the Chinaman had arrived in Chris Walker's company. But he could not perceive him.

Putting his fortune to the test, and having come to no open rupture with the lady, Rupert boldly walked up to Miss Wharf and offered his hand. She gave him rather a peculiar look and colored a little. But to his secret satisfaction she received him very kindly. Olivia took her husband's greeting with a quiet smile, rather cold, as she knew well Miss Pewsey was watching her face. As to that lady, she hovered round the group like an ugly old fairy, about to weave the spell.

"And where is the Major?" asked Miss Pewsey in her emphatic way; "surely he is present on this occasion."

"I am sorry to say that the Major is laid up with a bad cold," said Rupert. "I have just been to see him. He is not coming."

"A cold spoils his beauty," tittered Miss Pewsey; "dear me, how very vain that man is."

"A cold has not spoilt Miss Wharf's beauty, at all events," said Ainsleigh, seeing his way to a compliment. "I never saw you look so well," he added with a bow.

"Thanks to Lavinia's nursing," laughed the lady. "Olivia, can you keep still while that delicious music is playing? I'm sure Mr. Burgh—"

"I think Miss Rayner is engaged to me," put in Rupert promptly.

Miss Wharf tapped him on the shoulder with the very fan about which there had been so much talk. "No, I can't spare you," she said amiably. "I want to chat with you. Olivia?"

The girl exchanged a look with her husband and saw that his eyes were fastened on the fan. Resolved to give him a chance of talking to her aunt about it, she moved away on the arm of the buccaneer to join in the whirling throng. Forge offered his arm to Miss Pewsey, not to dance, but to escort her on to the terrace, and so it came about that Aunt Sophia and Rupert were left alone in a quiet corner of the room.

Miss Wharf cast a side glance at the young man, and seeing how handsome and gay he was she heaved a sigh. Perhaps she was thinking of his father whom she had loved dearly, but if so the emotion was only momentary, for she compressed her lips and drew herself up stiffly. "Mr. Ainsleigh," she said, "you never come to see me now. How is that?"

"I thought you did not wish to see me," said Rupert frankly.

"Oh, yes, I do. Your father was an old friend of mine, and for his sake I wish to be kind to you."

Rupert saw that she was unaware that he had met Olivia secretly, and had heard the story of the early romance. It was not wise, he thought, to bring up the subject, so he met her on her own ground. "You can be very kind to me if you wish," he said, casting a significant glance on Olivia who floated past with Burgh.

Miss Wharf followed his gaze and frowned, shaking her head. "No," she said severely, "you must give up the idea of marrying Olivia."

"I can't do that," replied Rupert, thinking of his secret marriage, "and I don't see why you should refuse to let me love her."

"I can't prevent that," snapped Miss Wharf; "love her as much as you choose, but as another man's wife," and again she looked oddly at Rupert, who wondered what she meant.

"What an immoral remark," he said; "perhaps you will explain."

"Mr. Ainsleigh, I will be frank with you," said the lady calmly, "you have no money, and are liable to lose Royabay. I hold a mortgage, it is true, and by the end of the year I can foreclose; but that I shall not do if you give up Olivia. If I foreclose, you know well enough that your other creditors will come down on you, and you will lose all. I hold the scales," added she significantly.

"I see that well enough, Miss Wharf, but many things may happen before the end of the year."

"You mean that you will get the money to pay me and others?"

"I might even mean that," answered Rupert coolly,

"and if I am a bad match, I don't think Mr. Burgh is a better. I have at least a position and a clean name."

"What do you know about Clarence Burgh?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing, save that he is an adventurer, Miss Wharf. He comes from nowhere, and swaggers about Marport as if it belonged to him. He has no recognized position and he is not a gentleman."

"Oh, but he is, and I want him to marry Olivia."

"And thus you would condemn Olivia to misery. She loves me—"

"A girl's love," said Miss Wharf coolly; "she'll soon get over that. Mr. Burgh is Lavinia's nephew, and I have promised Lavinia that Olivia shall be his wife."

"Why, in heaven's name?" asked Rupert angrily; "he has no money."

"Oh, yes, he has, and may have a chance of getting more. Lavinia has been a good friend to me for years and years—all my life in fact, Mr. Ainsleigh. I owe much to her, and I intend to repay her. Her heart is set on this match, and Olivia must marry Clarence."

"Olivia shall not."

"Olivia shall. I set my will against yours, Mr. Ainsleigh."

"You'll find my will is stronger," said Rupert coolly.

Miss Wharf gave a short laugh. "Try," she said curtly; then her hard eyes softened and her cold manner grew warmer. "Don't let us quarrel," she said gently. "I wish you well, and would give you anything save Olivia—"

"Which is the only thing I want."

"How rude of you to call Olivia a 'thing,'" said the

woman lightly; "you may make up your mind that if you marry her, I shall leave my money to Miss Pewsey."

"Do so. I don't want your money."

"Five hundred a year is not enough," sneered Miss Wharf, "but I may have more. What do you say to five thousand—"

"Oh!" interrupted Rupert coolly, "so Olivia has told you about the fan—or perhaps Miss Pewsey."

"It was Olivia. I believe Clarence Burgh told her. This fan," Miss Wharf unfurled the article, "means five thousand pounds—"

"Or a cut throat," said Rupert quickly.

"Pah! how foolish you are, as though such a thing could happen in England. Were we in China I admit that I should be afraid to keep this fan; but as it is I am perfectly safe. See here, Mr. Ainsleigh," she added, bending toward him, "if you will give up Olivia I will give you this fan and you can get the money to pay off your creditors."

"No," said Rupert at once. "I need thirty thousand, not five. And even if you were to give me the thirty thousand I need, I would not sell Olivia for that sum."

"Look at the fan first," said Miss Wharf, and gave it to him.

Rupert's nerves thrilled as he took the dainty trifle in his hand. So much had been said about it, so much hung on it, of the meaning of which he was ignorant, that he could not look at it without feeling the drama it represented. Balzac's remark about killing a mandarin in China to obtain a fortune, occurred to his mind. This fan, dainty and fragile, might cost the life of such a mandarin. It all depended into whose hands it fell.

The fan was exactly as the advertisement described. On one side the pale green sticks were enamelled and smooth; on the other thin slivers of jade covered the wood, and were inscribed in quaint Chinese characters in gold. The handle was of gold, and therefrom hung a thick cord of yellow silk, with four beads and half a bead thereon. Three beads and the half one were of jade, but the remaining ball was of jasper. What these might mean Rupert could not understand, but apparently they were connected with the secret of the fan, whatever that might be. Certainly, whatever its significance, the secret dealt with the life of Lo-Keong, with the life of Dr. Forge, and with the life of Miss Wharf, seeing she now possessed the article. All the time Rupert furled and unfurled the fan, admiring its beauty, she kept her cold eyes on him. "Think," she whispered, "five thousand pounds may gain you a few months' respite—you may be able to save the Abbey."

Rupert shook his head. "If I lose Olivia I don't care about keeping Royabay. It can be sold up and I'll go abroad to the colonies to work for my living."

"Without Olivia?"

"No. With Olivia. Nothing will buy her from me."

Miss Wharf, finding all her arts fail, snatched the fan from him, and bit her lip. Her eyes flashed, and she seemed on the point of making some remark, but refrained. "Very good, Mr. Ainsleigh," said she. "I'll see what I can do with Olivia. You have ruined her."

"What do you mean by that, Miss Wharf?"

"You'll find out, my friend," she replied, clenching the fan fiercely. "Oh, I am not so blind or so ignorant as you think me."

Ainsleigh turned crimson. He wondered if by any

chance she had heard of the marriage, and it was on the tip of his tongue to put a leading question to Miss Wharf, when Chris Walker came up. He was not alone. With him was a small Chinaman with the impassive face of the Celestial. Tung-Yu—as Rupert guessed he was—wore a gorgeous yellow gown, with a kind of blue silk blouse over it. His feet were encased in thick Chinese shoes wonderfully embroidered and his pigtail was down. Several ladies cast avaricious looks at these gorgeous vestments, and especially at the blouse, which was heavy with dragons woven in gold thread. In his thin yellow hand with long finger nails Tung-Yu held a small ivory fan, and he stood impassively before Miss Wharf, not even casting a look at the fan in her hand, which he was prepared to buy at such a large price.

"This is Mr. Tung-Yu," said Chris boyishly. "He wants to meet you, Miss Wharf. He admires English ladies."

"I fear I can't speak his language, Chris."

"He can speak ours to perfection," said Walker.

Tung-Yu bowed politely and spoke in admirably chosen English. "I was at Cambridge," he said calmly, "and I know of your Western culture. If you will permit me, madam." He took a seat beside Miss Wharf.

Chris, seeing his friend well established, looked around. "Where is Miss Rayner?" he asked. "Oh, there she is—the dance is over."

And so it was. The dancers were streaming out on to the balcony and the room was almost empty. Burgh, with Olivia on his arm, came toward Miss Wharf, and Chris hurried forward to ask Miss Rayner for a dance. But quick as he was, Rupert was quicker. He had seen his

wife dance with one admirer, and was not going to let her dance with another. "Miss Rayner is engaged to me," he said, and offered his arm with a defiant look at Burgh, to whom he had not been introduced.

Burgh showed no disposition to let Olivia go, and scowled. But his eye fell on the Chinaman seated by Miss Wharf, and he suddenly moved away. It seemed to Rupert that the buccaneer was afraid. Chris remained to protest, but Ainsleigh ended the matter by abruptly taking Olivia out of the room. Miss Wharf frowned when she saw them depart and opened her mouth, as though to call Olivia back. But on second thoughts she contented herself with another frown and then turned to speak to Tung-Yu. "I have heard of you," she said.

"From my friend, Mr. Walker," said the polite Chinaman.

"Oh, yes, and from some one else, through a third party. I heard of your advertisement—"

"What advertisement?" asked Tung-Yu.

"About this fan," and Miss Wharf waved it under Tug-Yu's narrow eyes, which did not change their expression of indifference.

"I do not understand, madam."

The lady looked astonished. "Why? Didn't you advertise for the fan?"

Tung-Yu permitted himself to smile. "Who told you I did?" he asked.

"Mr. Ainsleigh, who left just now, told a friend of mine, who told me," said Miss Wharf. "I understood you wished to possess this fan."

"No," said Tung-Yu indifferently; "the advertisement was placed in the paper by a compatriot of mine called

Hwei. He asked me to see any one who called about it, as he was engaged. I saw Mr. Ainsleigh and told him what he told your friend. You must apply to Hwei."

"And have my life taken," said Miss Wharf, with a shudder.

This time the Chinaman was not able to suppress a start. "I do not quite understand, madam," he repeated.

"Oh, yes, you do, Mr. Tung-Yu. Hwei would murder me to get this fan. I prefer to sell it to you for five thousand pounds."

The Chinaman's face became impassive again, though his eyes looked surprised. "I assure you, this is quite wrong, madam. My friend Hwei wants the fan, because it belongs to a mandarin who received it as a gift from his dead wife. So dearly does this mandarin prize it that he is willing to buy it at any price."

"Even five thousand pounds?"

"I believe so. This mandarin is rich." He turned his narrow eyes again on the lady. "Did the person who said that Hwei would go as far as crime, tell you the mandarin's name?"

"No. Who is the mandarin?"

"I fear I cannot tell you, madam. Hwei did not tell me. If you like I will bring him to you."

Miss Wharf hesitated. Her avarice was aroused by the hope of getting rid of a trifle for five thousand pounds, but she did not wish to risk herself alone with a bloodthirsty Celestial. "If you will come also," she said, hesitating.

Tung-Yu reflected. "Madam, I will be plain with you," he said gravely; "as I am here, I can act on behalf of my friend Hwei—but to-morrow."

Miss Wharf tendered the fan. "Why not take it to-night and give me a check?" she said quickly.

"To-morrow," replied the Chinaman, rising and bowing politely, "I will call on you, if you will permit me. Mr. Walker will show me the way. I will then arrange to buy the fan at a price to which you will not object. Meanwhile—" he bowed again and gravely departed.

Miss Wharf, rather annoyed and surprised by this behavior, looked round for Miss Pewsey, to whom she was accustomed to tell everything. The little woman appeared at that moment pushing her way through the crowd in a state of excitement. "Oh, Sophia!" she said, throwing herself down. "Oh, Sophia!"

"What's the matter?" asked Miss Wharf coldly.

"I might ask you," said Miss Pewsey, parrying the question; "you look so upset, my Sophia."

"It is with pleasure, then," said the old maid dryly. "I have arranged to sell this fan to-morrow for five thousand pounds."

"Oh!" Miss Pewsey clasped her hands. "What joy! You will be able to add to your income. But, Sophia, I really can't keep it any longer. That Major Tidman—"

"Well. What about him?"

"Mr. Ainsleigh said he had a cold and was confined to his room. I went up to see, as I don't trust that Major a bit. He's so wicked. I went to his room, and peeped in. Sophia," added Miss Pewsey, in a tragic manner, "he is not there—the room is empty!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE END OF THE BALL.

MISS WHARF looked at her excited little friend with an indulgent smile. "Really, I don't see why you should trouble," she said with a smile. "Let the Major do what he likes."

"He's up to some mischief," persisted the old maid, "and I'd like to find out what it is. He is supposed to be keeping his room, because of a cold, and I find he is not in. People with colds," added the lady, impressively, "do not go into the night air."

"How do you know Major Tidman has?"

"Because he would be at the ball, were he in the hotel. I shall ask Clarence to see what he is doing."

"Why?" asked Miss Wharf, puzzled.

"Because—oh, just because," replied Miss Pewsey, tossing her head in a sharp way, like the Red Queen in "Alice's Adventures." "But the fan, dearest Sophia?—Can't I take charge of it?"

Miss Wharf grasped the fan tighter. "No, certainly not. It is worth five thousand pounds."

"And perhaps more," said Miss Pewsey. "Remember, dearest Sophia, that is the sum offered, but you might ask more. It is very important that this mandarin should get the fan back. Dr. Forge told me."

"Why is it important?"

"Theophilus didn't tell me that, but he said that this

mandarin—I quite forget his queer name—would give even more than five thousand to get it back."

"His emissary didn't seem very anxious to buy."

"Oh, that is craft," rejoined Miss Pewsey, tossing her head. "The Chinese are very double, Theophilus says."

"I don't think so, Lavinia. I would have sold this fan for a few pounds had I not known such a large sum was offered. Tung-Yu is not a good business man, or else the mandarin must be a millionaire."

"He is—he is. I wish you would let me conduct the business, and *do* let me take the fan?"

"No, I shall keep it."

"Sophia," said Miss Pewsey, solemnly, "that is dangerous. Rupert Ainsleigh hates you and needs money; he might kill you to get that fan, and sell it for five—"

"Nonsense. I cannot be murdered in a house full of people like this. I know another Chinaman hints at murder—you told me so—"

"Olivia told me to tell you," put in the little woman, quickly.

"Well, Hwei isn't here, and I'll sell the fan to Tung-Yu to-morrow."

Miss Pewsey would have said more, but at this moment Dr. Forge approached, with a crooked elbow and a dreary smile. "Allow me to take you in to supper, Miss Wharf."

"Certainly," she rose and took the arm. "I am really hungry. Lavinia?"

"I shall look for Clarence. I must find out what has become of Major Tidman," and the old maid hurried away, while the doctor escorted Miss Wharf to the supper-room.

. Clarence was not drinking at the buffet, though his aunt went there to find him as the most likely place. Nor

was he in the ball-room, although a new dance had begun. She could not see him in the card-room, but finally ran him to earth on the terrace, where he was leaning against a tree-fern with folded arms and with his wicked black eyes fixed on a couple some distance away. Miss Pewsey followed his gaze and her eyes also flashed, for she beheld Rupert talking with Olivia. Both their heads were bent, and they conversed earnestly. The little woman hated Olivia and detested Rupert, so the sight was gall and wormwood to her. "Why don't you ask her to dance?" she demanded, touching her nephew's arm.

"Because there would only be a row," he rejoined sullenly. "I feel inclined to spoil that chap's looks, I can tell you."

"Do you really love the girl so?"

"Yes, I do. I'd give anything to marry her, and I shall, too."

"There's not the slightest chance. Ainsleigh will not surrender her, I can tell you."

"Then why did you make me waste that fan?"

"You didn't waste it on her," said Miss Pewsey coldly; "she refused to take it like a fool, and now Sophia has it, there is no chance of getting it back. Had I known the fan was of such value, you wouldn't have caught me advising you to part with it. If you knew what this Hwei said, why didn't you tell me the fan was valuable?"

"I did not see Hwei until I had parted with the fan," said Clarence crossly, "and we can do nothing now."

"You are not so bold as Major Tidman," she whispered.

"What's that?" asked the buccaneer sharply.

"He's not in his room," rejoined Miss Pewsey in a low

voice; "he pretends illness, to carry out his plan to get the fan."

"How do you know that?"

"Because Tung-Yu is in the hotel. The Major will try and get the fan to sell it to him."

"In that case he would have come to the ball and have seen Miss Wharf to get it from her."

"No. He has some other plan. What it is I don't know. But I wish you would look round for him, Clarence, and watch him."

"Bah! It's all stuff." Burgh turned to look at the sea and the pier and the luminous night. "I'm getting sick of this business," he went on discontentedly, "and but for the chance of gaining Olivia, I would bunk out on the long trail. There's a barky, out there," he continued, pointing to the right of the pier, "yonder—the one with the green light. I saw her anchor early in the afternoon—a kind of gentleman's yacht, I fancy. She'd just do for me. I'd like to take a boat and pull out to her, and then get up steam for the South Seas. There's a clear path leads there, down channel," and he stared at the flickering green light which winked among many red ones.

"You'll never get Olivia," said Miss Pewsey, in a sharp tense voice, "and you can go away as soon as you like. Meantime, look for Major Tidman and tell him I want him."

Clarence lazily stretched himself, and moved off along the balcony. At the end there was a flight of shallow steps leading down to an iron gate which was open. Thence one could pass to the Esplanade and the beach, if so inclined. But the guests kept to the populous end of the balcony where the lights clustered. Near the stairs there

were hardly any lamps, and a screen of flowers curtained it off from the rest of the hotel. Clarence passed through this floral arch, and Miss Pewsey lost sight of him. Her eyes turned to the couple she hated, and she carelessly moved near them. No one noted her as the balcony was not so full, and she sat down behind a fern where she could hear without being seen by the two she was spying on. Their voices were low, but hate sharpened Miss Pewsey's ears, and she listened intently.

"My aunt is much more amiable to-night," Olivia was saying. "I suppose the chance of making five thousand pounds has appealed to her."

"She gave me the chance of making it, provided I gave you up," said Rupert, "and she lost her temper with me because I declined."

"Will you never be friends with her?"

"I fear not, while Miss Pewsey is in the way," said Rupert. "Olivia, it is that woman who makes all the mischief."

"I think it is," replied the girl, with a weary smile, "but she seems to have a kind of hypnotic power over my aunt—"

"What do you mean?"

"Aunt Sophia has bad headaches, and Miss Pewsey sometimes hypnotizes her to send away the pain."

"Miss Wharf is foolish to allow her to do such a thing. That little woman is no more to be trusted than her scamp of a nephew is."

"Well, it doesn't matter," said Olivia, feeling in her pocket. "I want to talk about ourselves. See, Rupert, you wanted a silk tie the other day. I have knitted you one—red and yellow."

Rupert took the tie and admired it in the lamplight.

He would have kissed Olivia's hand after a few words of warm thanks, but she prevented him.

"Some one might see and tell Aunt Sophia," she said hurriedly. "I should have given it to you the other day when I called at the Abbey, but I forgot, so I decided to give it to you to-night. It's rather awkward your having it now. Give it to me again."

"No! I'll put it in my overcoat in the cloak-room," said Rupert, rising, "but I must take you back to Miss Wharf or she will be angry."

"I wish this deception was at an end and I could be with you altogether," said Olivia, rising with a sigh.

It was at this moment that Miss Pewsey chose to come forward. She was furious at the way in which the couple spoke of her, but long habit enabled her to smooth her face to a treacherous smile.

"Oh, dear Olivia," she said. "I have been looking for you everywhere."

"Does my aunt want me?" asked the girl calmly.

"No. She is in the supper-room with Mr. Forge. But Mr. Walker—"

"I don't want him," said Miss Rayner quickly, and with a change of voice.

"Yes—yes," said Rupert in a low voice. "Go with her, and dance with Walker; it will prevent Miss Wharf being cross."

"Very well," rejoined Olivia quietly: then turned to Miss Pewsey, who smiled like a grotesque image. "Let us go to the ball-room."

"Won't Mr. Ainsleigh escort us?" asked the old maid, blandly. Rupert bowed, and smothering his feelings, which always revolted at the sight of the woman, he walked

beside the two to the ball-room. Miss Pewsey took Olivia's arm and chattered effusively all the time. At the door they met Chris Walker, who hurried up at once and asked for a dance. Leaving the two ladies with him, Rupert went toward the cloak-room. Here to his surprise he saw Major Tidman clothed in a heavy fur coat talking to Tung-Yu. Tidman looked white and uneasy, but the Chinaman still preserved his impassive face. Rupert took no notice, but simply nodded to the Major as he passed, pulling out the yellow and red tie as he did so. Tidman changed color, apparently not pleased at being found talking to Tung-Yu, and laughed uneasily. "That's a bright piece of goods, Ainsleigh."

"It's a present," said Rupert, thrusting the tie into the pocket of his overcoat. "I should think it would match your friend's dress."

"Hush," said Tidman quietly, "he speaks English; he will hear"; then he added aloud, "Let me introduce you to Mr. Ainsleigh, Tung-Yu."

The Chinaman turned and looked impassive enough. But his eyes had an inquiring look in their black depths. "Tung-Yu and I met in Canton, where we had an adventure," said the Major, with a titter.

"About that famous fan?" asked Rupert smiling.

Tung-Yu started and looked quickly at Tidman, who was again pale. "I don't remember about the fan," said Tung-Yu, "did our friend find it in Canton?"

"No! No! I never did," said Tidman hurriedly,—"that is, Forge found the fan—"

"And gave it to Miss Wharf. Quite so," replied Tung-Yu blandly. "I see her to-morrow about the matter," then he bowed to Rupert and moved away slowly.

"I thought you had a bad cold," said Rupert to Tidman, who was looking after the Chinaman with a scared expression.

"Yes—yes—but that is better now," said the Major hurriedly; "so Miss Wharf is here, and has the fan?"

"Yes—she offered to give it to me if I surrendered Olivia."

"Refuse—refuse," cried Tidman hurriedly: he approached his lips to Ainsleigh's ears. "There is death in the air to-night."

"Tidman!" cried Ainsleigh, starting away and staring.

"Yes—yes—say nothing. I wish you hadn't mentioned about my having the fan. Tung-Yu never knew—but it can't be helped. Ainsleigh, is there another Chinaman here to-night?"

"I have seen none. Do you expect Hwei? If so, we had better warn Miss Wharf. She has the fan and—"

"No, no—say nothing. Don't touch the accursed thing."

"How do you know it is accursed?"

"I knew in Canton, and in a very unpleasant way. But I'll tell you my adventure to-morrow—yes, I will—if nothing happens to-night."

Rupert stared still harder. "What can happen to-night, man alive?"

"Nothing—nothing," said the Major hurriedly. "I'll get back to my room—you needn't say you have seen me. I—"

"Just the man I want," cried a bold free voice, and Burgh's slim hand fell on the Major's shoulder. "Miss Pewsey asks for you."

"For me. Any more trouble?"

"I guess not. She wants to fuss round about your cold. Heaping coals of fire 's the English of it."

"Let her leave me alone," said the Major petulantly. "I'm quite well. I am going back to my room," and with a nod to Rupert, he marched out.

Burgh looked after him with a smile and a shrug: then he turned to Rupert who was moving toward the door. "Can I speak with you?" he asked with a frown.

"Not here, Mr. Burgh," cried Ainsleigh; "this is not the place for a quarrel."

"And why not?" cried the other, advancing with clenched fists. "I—"

"Keep your distance," said Ainsleigh sharply, starting back on his guard, "the attendant is looking on," and he pointed to the man behind the counter who attended to the hats and cloaks.

Burgh tossed him a shilling. "Go and get a drink," he ordered.

"Stop where you are," commanded Rupert, "or I'll report you."

But the man, who was a dissipated-looking waiter, pretended not to hear this last remark, and disappeared from behind the counter. The two men were alone, and Burgh spoke first. "I guess I'm going to lay you out," said he, "on account of—"

"Stop," said Rupert, "mention no names."

"I'll mention what I like and Olivia—"

Ainsleigh let drive before he could finish the word and in a second Burgh was sprawling on the floor. He rose with an oath and slipped round his right hand. "You draw a revolver and I'll break your neck," panted Rupert; "you bully, what do you mean by—"

Burgh drew his hand away—perhaps he was afraid a shot would bring in others to see the fray. But he dashed again at the young man. A short struggle ensued, which ended in Burgh being thrown again. Then Rupert, disinclined for a vulgar row, walked away. He stopped at the door to give his antagonist a bit of advice. "You touch me again," he said, "and I'll hand you over to the police after giving you a good thrashing. It's what a bully like you deserves. And if you dare to speak to Miss Rayner I'll make Marport too hot to hold you." When Rupert vanished, Burgh raised himself slowly and with an evil smile. "Perhaps the place will be too hot for you, my fine gentleman," he said savagely, and began to think.

Meanwhile Rupert went to the ball-room and saw that Olivia was dancing with Dr. Forge. Chris Walker told him that Miss Wharf had gone on to the balcony for the fresh air. Miss Pewsey was not to be seen, or Rupert would have told her to look after her disreputable relative in the cloak-room. The young man thought he would go up to the Major's room and have a smoke, when he felt a light touch on his shoulder. There stood Tung-Yu.

"Excuse me, sir," said the Chinaman, in his excellent English, "I am your friend. Major Tidman and Dr. Forge are your enemies, and you have a third enemy in that young man Burgh."

"But how do you know—" began Rupert.

Tung-Yu bent forward and whispered. "I know how your father died," he said softly, and before Rupert could detain him, he vanished.

But Ainsleigh waited but for a moment. The speech was so surprising that he determined to learn more. At once he ran after the Chinaman, but could not see him. In

spite of his noticeable clothes, he was swallowed up in the crowd, and Rupert plunged into the gay throng determined to find the man who could solve the mystery of Markham Ainsleigh's death.

The night wore on and the fun became fast and furious. Toward twelve the guests began to depart, but many choice spirits declared they would keep the ball rolling till dawn. One of these was Chris Walker, who had imbibed more champagne than was good for him. While he talked excitedly Miss Pewsey came to him hastily. "Where is my dear Sophia?" she asked. "I can't find her, and with her delicate health it is time she was home in bed."

"I have not seen her. Have you, Dr. Forge?"

The lean doctor shook his head. "I have been in the card-room for the last hour," he said, "and as Miss Wharf's doctor I assuredly say, she should go home; there's midnight," and as he spoke the strokes boomed from a tall clock in the hall.

"Clarence, have you seen her?" asked Miss Pewsey of the buccaneer who had Olivia on his arm.

"No! I've just been waltzing with Miss Rayner."

"Then you, Mr. Ainsleigh?"

"I have been smoking on the balcony," said Rupert, who looked tired.

"Oh, dear me," said Miss Pewsey, wringing her hands, "I wonder if dear Sophia has gone to see Major Tidman. She is so kind-hearted and he is ill—at least he says he is. Did he tell you, Clarence?"

"I saw him only for a minute and he went back to his room, I guess."

"Then Sophia must have gone there," cried Miss Pewsey and hurried away. Olivia followed with Forge, as she

thought also that her aunt ought to go home, and Clarence's attentions were becoming so embarrassing that she feared there would be trouble with Rupert. But soon Miss Pewsey appeared again and said that Miss Wharf was not in the Major's room, nor was the Major there. Taking Olivia and Clarence and Forge, she went to search for the missing lady. Rupert lingered behind as he did not wish to come into contact with the buccaneer.

The hunt proceeded for some time, and every room in the hotel was searched. But Miss Wharf could not be found. Finally every one—for many of the guests were hunting by this time—went out on the balcony. Miss Wharf was not there. "Oh, dear me," cried Miss Pewsey, "wherever can she be?"

The balcony was searched from end to end. Then one of the guests, more venturesome, descended the steps. He gave a cry of horror. "Bring a light," he cried.

Lights were brought and every one rushed after them. Half way down the steps lay Miss Wharf—dead—strangled, and round her throat tightly bound was a yellow and red silk tie.

CHAPTER X.

A MYSTERIOUS CASE.

THE murder of Miss Sophia Wharf at the Bristol Hotel Ball made a great sensation. She had been well known in Marport, and her many friends were enormously excited that each and every one of them had been acquainted with a person who had been—as one of them put it—done to death. Also the circumstances of the murder were most extraordinary. It seemed almost incredible that a popular lady should be murdered in so public a place; though many said that the safety of the assassin lay in the very fact that he had chosen to commit his crime a few yards away from a spot where many people were congregated. But who had killed Miss Wharf and why she was killed in so brutal a manner, no one could understand.

When the local police heard of the assassination, an inspector with two subordinates took possession of the hotel, and obtained from the manager a list of the guests present at the ball. As these amounted to something like two hundred, it seemed like looking for a needle in a haystack to search for the criminal among them. And many of them did not know Miss Wharf even by sight, so it was certain that the task of identifying the assassin would be one of enormous difficulty. And the question was asked on all hands: "What had taken the deceased lady down the little-frequented steps?" The fan was missing—Miss Pewsey noticed that, when she bent over the dead, but the story of the fan was not yet public property.

According to custom the local police communicated with the Treasury, who placed the case in the hands of the Criminal Investigation Department, and thus it came about, that a plain clothes officer—in other words a detective—was sent down to Marport. This individual was called Rodgers, and after paying a visit to the Superintendent of the Marport Police Office, he went to Ivy Lodge. Here everything was gloomy and silent. The body of the unfortunate woman had been brought home, and was laid out for burial. Dr. Forge, who with others had been on the spot at the time of the discovery, examined the corpse, and asserted that the miserable woman must have been murdered just an hour or half an hour previous. As midnight was chiming shortly before the discovery of the crime, it can be safely declared—and Dr. Forge did declare this—that Miss Wharf was strangled between eleven and twelve. When the corpse was found it was yet warm. Clarence haunted the Lodge and talked with his aunt, but Olivia kept to her own room.

"Tung-Yu did it, of course," said Mr. Burgh decisively. "I reckon he came down to get that fan, and grudged giving so much cash for it. I surmise that he lured the old girl to those steps, and then slipped the silk string round her neck."

"The silk tie," said Miss Pewsey, whose eyes were very black and glittering, though red round the rims, from weeping.

"How do you know it's a tie?" asked Clarence, with a start.

"I know," replied his aunt, tightening her thin lips, "and I know to whom the tie belongs. But you say that Tung-Yu—"

"Who else could have scragged the old girl, Aunt Lavinia? The fan's gone—leastways I didn't see it when we spotted the deader."

Miss Pewsey nodded. "Yes, the fan is gone," she assented, "but if Tung-Yu murdered dearest Sophia, he can easily be arrested."

"Oh, I guess not," replied Mr. Burgh easily. "Tung-Yu's no slouch, you bet, and didn't intend to lose his prize—"

"The fan?" inquired Miss Pewsey.

"Just so, the fan," replied Clarence imperturbably, "and he's on his way to China by this time."

"Clarence!" Miss Pewsey rose, much excited; then calmed down. "I do not agree with you," said she firmly. "Tung-Yu is innocent."

"I'll lay a couple of dollars he isn't, Aunt Lavinia. Do you remember that yacht I pointed out to you last night? Well, 'twas a steam deep-sea barky, two hundred tons, Lloyd's measurement, I reckon—quite heavy enough to cut round the Cape into Chinese waters. Well, she arrived in the afternoon yesterday and after midnight she lighted out."

"But how do you know Tung-Yu was on board?"

"Well, I only size that up," said Clarence musingly, "but it looks to me as though he'd engineered the job. 'Twould be easy I guess for him to have had a boat waiting for him. After he'd killed the old girl and annexed the fan, he could dance down those steps like a two year old and pick up the boat on the beach. Course it's all my fancy," added Burgh modestly, "but I guess I'm right."

"I guess you're not," snapped Miss Pewsey in rather an unlady-like manner, and she rose to shake out her

skirts. "I know who killed dearest Sophia," she added, wagging a lean finger at her nephew. "I know who possessed the tie, and I shall hand that man—"

"Who the dickens is he anyhow?"

"Rupert Ainsleigh," replied Miss Pewsey with a grim smile, and left the room, while the buccaneer stared and then smiled. It was pleasant to think that his rival—as he considered Rupert—should be in such straits and should be pursued by the vindictive hatred of Miss Pewsey, who would leave no stone unturned to bring about the conviction of young Ainsleigh.

"Well," said the buccaneer with his hands in his pockets. "I guess I'm not taking a hand in this biznai, and it ain't lively round these quarters. I'll git."

And this Mr. Burgh did. When he passed out of the front door, he brushed against a plainly dressed rubicund man with sharp gray eyes, who glanced at him inquisitively. However, the stranger said nothing but proceeded to ring the bell. The maid-servant who appeared took him into the drawing-room and carried a card to Miss Pewsey. The name thereon was, Orlando Rodgers, C.I.D.

With this in her hand Miss Pewsey sailed into the drawing-room and looked at the comfortable creature who rose to greet her. "Mr. Orlando Rodgers, C.I.D.?" queried the little old lady.

"Criminal Investigation Department," said the man in a cool voice, and with a sharp glance at the dry drab woman. "I'm in charge of the Wharf Murder Case, and have been sent down by the Treasury. As I have seen the Superintendent and can learn nothing likely to throw light on the subject, I have come to you—a relative?"

"No," answered Miss Pewsey, sitting down, in a rigid

way. "I am the companion of the late Miss Wharf. Her only relative, down here at all events, is Miss Olivia Rayner."

"Can I see her?"

"I think not—at present. She is in her room weeping. Though why she should display such grief I can't understand," added Miss Pewsey spitefully.

"It's natural in a relative, miss," said the detective, looking hard at the withered little face.

Miss Pewsey laughed in a shrill manner, and spoke between her teeth more than ever, emphasizing every word as usual. "Oh, dear me, no," said she. "Miss Wharf and Olivia never got on well. The girl hated her aunt, though dearest Sophia—Miss Wharf, you know, sir—brought her up, when she hadn't a shilling or a friend in the world."

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked Rodgers, wondering how much of this spiteful speech was true, and seeing plainly enough that the speaker was no friend to the niece.

"I am Lavinia Pewsey," said that lady, "and for years I have been the cherished friend and dearest companion of Sophia. We were at school together, and were—as I may say—like two cherries on one stalk. Anything I can do to avenge her death will be done."

"Punishment by the law doesn't come under the head of vengeance!"

"It comes under the head of hanging, and I'll be glad to see the rope round his neck."

"Of whom are you talking?" asked Rodgers phlegmatically.

"Of the man who killed my dearest friend."

"Oh! I understood from the Superintendent that the affair was quite a mystery."

"Not to me," snapped Miss Pewsey. "Rupert Ainsleigh strangled her to get the fan."

"What fan?" asked the detective, taking out his notebook; "and who is Rupert Ainsleigh?"

Miss Pewsey spread her skirts and folded her hands together in a prim way. "I shall tell you all," she cried, "and please take down all I say. I am prepared to make this statement in a law court."

"Well," said Rodgers, moistening his pencil, "you may have to. Now, this Mr. Ainsleigh?—"

"Of Royabay, a few miles from Marport," said Miss Pewsey, "quite one of the old families. A nice come down for the Ainsleighs, for the last of them to die on the gallows."

"He is not there yet," said Rodgers dryly, "and may I ask you to speak in a more reasonable way? I see you don't like the man."

"I hate him," Miss Pewsey drew a long breath, "and I hated his father before him, to say nothing of his mother, who was a cat."

"Then your evidence is prejudiced, I fancy."

"Never you mind, Mr. Orlando Rodgers," she replied sharply; "take down what I say, and then you can sift the matter out for yourself. My Sophia was murdered to obtain possession of a fan—"

"What fan?" asked Rodgers again.

Miss Pewsey smiled, and calmly detailed all she had learned from Dr. Forge concerning the fan. "You can ask my nephew, Clarence Burgh, about these things also," she ended, "and Dr. Forge, and Mr. Christopher Walker,

who brought the Chinaman Tung-Yu to the ball, and—"

"Wait a bit," interrupted the detective; "it appears to me from what you say," he ran a quick eye over his notes, "that the suspicion points to these Chinamen you mention. They advertised, and they wanted the fan. Now Hwei—as I hear from you—was not at the ball, but Tung-Yu was. Therefore Tung-Yu—"

"Didn't do it," said the little woman. "I don't pretend to understand why Hwei offered death and Tung-Yu money for the possession of the fan; nor do I know why this mandarin, whatever his name may be, is so anxious to get possession of the article. But I know that the fan is gone and that Tung-Yu, who did not intend murder, hasn't got it."

"Then who has?"

"Rupert Ainsleigh. He went up about the advertisement and knew all about the fan. I believe he killed my Sophia, and got the fan, so as to sell it for five thousand to Tung-Yu—"

"But a gentleman of property wouldn't—"

"A gentleman of property," snorted the old maid, smoothing her dress; "why he's head over ears in debt and will lose Royabay before the end of the year on account of the foreclosure of a mortgage. He'd have done anything to get money, and five thousand pounds is not a small amount."

"This is all very well; but I don't see how you connected Mr. Ainsleigh with the crime."

"By means of the silk necktie," said Miss Pewsey with a triumphant smile, and related how Rupert had received the scarf from Olivia; "if he is guiltless how came his silk tie round the throat of Sophia?"

Rodgers was shaken by this piece of evidence. "It looks queer, I admit," he said; then added, "I understand that Mr. Ainsleigh is an admirer of Miss Rayner."

"He wants to marry her, and she is in love with him," said Miss Pewsey, "which is an additional reason for the crime."

"I don't understand."

"You're not a sharp man," said the old woman; "don't you see that as Miss Rayner inherits dearest Sophia's money, she will get the mortgage also? Then with that, and the five thousand pounds, Mr. Ainsleigh would be free from his money troubles. Well," she added sharply, as the detective rose, "what do you say?"

"Nothing at present. Give me the address of Dr. Forge, who, I believe, examined the body, and of your nephew and Mr. Ainsleigh."

Miss Pewsey did this with alacrity and accompanied Rodgers to the door. "Don't spare him," she said venomously, "he's guilty and he shall hang," and she shut the door herself.

"What a spiteful woman," mused Rodgers, leaving Ivy Lodge; "her story is so very explicit that I am inclined to doubt it. She wants this young man scragged. Why?"

He could find no answer to this question, but went on his way to see Clarence Burgh. His interview with the buccaneer was brief. Clarence related the story of the yacht, and set forth his theory of Tung-Yu. "Mind," said he, "I don't like Ainsleigh, as he's trying to run the girl I want to hitch long-side of. But I guess he didn't scragg the old girl."

"You speak fairer than your aunt," said Rodgers dryly.

Clarence heaved up his right shoulder. "Huh!" said

he, "if you go by woman's jaw, you'll get on the shoals. Tung-Yu scragged the old girl, you bet, and he's on his way to China in that yacht."

"Well, we'll see if we can't stop the yacht. She must coal somewhere. What is her name?"

"The Stormy Petrel," said Clarence; "I got that out of a boatman, who was rowing about her yesterday."

"Did he see any Chinaman on board?"

"No. He didn't see any one. There didn't appear to be any one about, or else they were at tea," concluded Clarence ungrammatically.

"Humph!" said the detective, noting the name of the yacht; "do you know anything of the silk tie?"

"No. Aunt Lavinia says it belongs to Ainsleigh, but I never saw it till it was round the throat of the old girl. I should like to think he put it there," said Clarence pleasantly, "for I want that chap out of the way; but I believe Tung-Yu's the man."

"Perhaps he is. Have you a copy of that advertisement?"

"No. But I reckon Ainsleigh has. Ain't you going to see him?"

Rodgers nodded. "Straight away. And I thank you for what you have told me. You want him hanged, I presume."

"Well, no, I reckon not. He's in my way, but I can lay him out on my own, without the lynching biznai."

"You are fairer than your aunt," said the detective once more.

"Go slow. She's only an acid-drop, and you can't size her up, just as an ordinary girl. She was crazy on Markham, the father of this young Ainsleigh, and—"

"And proposes to hang the son to avenge herself on his father. A nice woman, truly. But it seems to me, Mr. Burgh, that if any one killed Miss Wharf, Hwei is the man."

"Might be. He wasn't at the ball, anyhow. Tung-Yu was."

"But Tung-Yu—as I understand from Miss Pewsey—intended to call the next day—to-day, that is—and buy the fan for five thousand."

"Huh!" Clarence heaved up his shoulder again; "perhaps he thought he'd settle in another way. 'Day. I'll be along here whenever you like to call. I wish to see this biznai through, you bet."

Rodgers departed, and sought out Rupert at Royabay. The young man was walking up and down the terrace smoking furiously. At the sight of the stranger he frowned and Rodgers noted that he looked worn and ill. "Might be money worries," thought the detective, "and it might be the other thing."

However, he kept these thoughts to himself and merely detailed what he had learned from Miss Pewsey and set forth the accusation she brought against him. Ainsleigh heard the detective quietly enough, and smiled wearily when the explanation was concluded. "Miss Pewsey doesn't love me," he said quietly, "and would like to see me out of the way, so that Miss Rayner could marry her nephew."

"I see," nodded Rodgers; "Miss Rayner will have the dead lady's money, and the nephew is poor."

"I really don't know," replied Rupert coldly; "Mr. Burgh is a mystery to me. He comes from nowhere, though I believe he has been in China."

"And knows what about the fan?"

"I think so. At all events, young Walker declares that Burgh was talking to a Chinaman near the Mansion House. Burgh admits this, and also admits that the Chinaman was Hwei, who put in that advertisement."

"I'm inclined to suspect Hwei himself," said Rodgers, looking keenly at the worn face of the young man, "but this silk tie—"

"It is mine, Mr. Rodgers. Miss Rayner gave it to me last night."

"So Miss Pewsey says—on the balcony."

"Quite so. Miss Pewsey was spying and saw the tie given. As the colors are rather pronounced, she could easily identify it. I took it to the cloak-room and placed it in the pocket of my overcoat."

"And took it out again?"

"No." Rupert rose and grew crimson; "surely you are not so unjust as to believe Miss Pewsey's malignant tale."

"You may be sure, Mr. Ainsleigh, that I'll act fairly toward you," said the detective dryly; "but the tie having been used to strangle—"

"I don't know how it came round her throat," interrupted Ainsleigh imperiously; "I placed the tie in my overcoat pocket—that was the last I saw of it, until I noticed it on Miss Wharf's dead body."

"Did any one else see the tie?"

"Yes, Major Tidman?"

"Who is he?"

"A retired army man—South American Army—who stops at Bristol Hotel. He is much respected here. I went to the cloak-room, and found him talking to Tung-Yu. Both saw me place the tie in my coat."

Rodgers sat up. "Oh," said he, opening his eyes widely; "then Tung-Yu saw you place the tie in the coat."

"He did, but if you suspect he took it out again, I think you are wrong. He left the room, and I exchanged a few words with Major Tidman."

"What about?"

"About this fan. Major Tidman told me to leave it alone. But of course I never intended to meddle with it. Miss Wharf had it, and she hated me too much to let me handle it, though she did give me the chance of making the money," said Rupert, with an after-thought.

"Eh, how was that?"

"She offered to let me have the fan if I gave up my claim to Miss Rayner, whom she desired should marry Mr. Burgh; I refused."

"Humph!" said Rodgers again, "and how does Major Tidman come to know about the fan?"

"I refer you to him for an answer."

"And how did he come to know Tung-Yu?"

"I believe he met him in Canton," replied Rupert restlessly, "he had some adventure there—?"

"Connected with this ubiquitous fan?" asked Rodgers sharply.

"Yes. He promised to tell me the adventure to-day, but I had not seen him yet."

"Humph! He may come, after all. I'll call on this gentleman. At the Bristol, you say. Quite so," Rodgers took a note. "Now then, Mr. Ainsleigh, tell me how you came to go up about the advertisement."

Rupert related his father's dealings with Lo-Keong, and referred to the secret said to be connected with the fan. The detective heard him in silence, and appeared to be

struck by his frankness. "I think it's one of the most complicated cases I ever had to do with, Mr. Ainsleigh, and will take a lot of searching into."

"I hope you don't suspect me?"

"Humph! the tie is, strangely enough, the rope used to strangle this woman, and you admit that it is yours. But Tung-Yu saw you put it in your overcoat pocket, and he wanted the fan—"

"For five thousand pounds, remember. Hwei was the one who threatened to gain the fan, by killing."

"Don't defend Tung-Yu too much," said the detective dryly; "your position is not a pleasant one and—"

"Do you mean to arrest me?" asked Rupert, rising angrily.

"Not at present. But no doubt at the inquest you can prove an alibi."

Rupert turned away. "I can't," he said in a low voice. "I was walking outside smoking between eleven and twelve—on the beach."

"That's a pity, Mr. Ainsleigh; I may have to arrest you after all. But who is this gentleman? Major Tidman—! quite so. Good-day, Major."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CANTON ADVENTURE.

MAJOR TIDMAN, who was standing at the foot of the terrace, stared at the man before him. "How do you know my name?" he asked, and looked toward Rupert for a reply.

Mr. Rodgers produced a red silk handkerchief and wiped his face, for it was noon and very warm. "A guess on my part," he answered. "Mr. Ainsleigh said you might come here to tell him of your Canton adventure, and I fancied it might be you, Major Tidman."

"I am not aware," said the Major loftily, "why you should interest yourself in my private affairs."

"I interest myself in everybody's private affairs, when they have to do with murder," said Rodgers quietly.

Tidman stared and gasped. "Then you are—?"

"The detective in charge of the Wharf murder case. I am glad to see you, sir," he laid a finger on Tidman's chest; "you have something to tell me, no doubt?"

"No," said the Major, gasping again, "I have not."

Rupert looked at him suddenly and the Major's small eyes fell before that direct gaze. "Let us go into the library," said Ainsleigh tranquilly; "we may as well have a long talk before I am arrested."

Tidman jumped. "Arrested!" he cried, staring.

Something in his looks made Rodgers take the cue thus offered. "I may have to arrest Mr. Ainsleigh for the murder," he said significantly.

"But that's rubbish; why should he murder Miss Wharf?"

"On account of the fan," put in Rupert grimly.

"I'll never believe that—never," said Tidman vigorously.

Rodgers looked at him sideways. "Well, you see," said he in a cheerful voice, "Miss Wharf was strangled with a red and yellow silk tie, belonging to Mr. Ainsleigh."

"I know; and I saw him place that tie in his overcoat pocket."

"You say that. Quite so. Mr. Ainsleigh might have taken it out again."

"No. He couldn't have done that. The attendant came back and remained in the room all the rest of the evening."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I returned to the cloak-room to see if Mr. Ainsleigh was there. I learned from the attendant," said the Major volubly, "that Mr. Ainsleigh and Mr. Burgh had been fighting—"

"Oh," said the detective, "so Mr. Burgh knew of the tie also?"

"He did not," put in young Ainsleigh rapidly; "he came in after I put the tie away. He insulted me about—about a lady," said Rupert hesitating, "and I knocked him down twice."

"Didn't the attendant interfere?"

"No. Burgh threw him a shilling and told him to cut. I ordered the man to stay, but he obeyed Burgh. Then we had a row, and I went away."

"Leaving Mr. Burgh in the cloak-room?" asked Rodgers shrewdly.

"Yes. But he knew nothing about the tie. He could not have taken it. I am sure he didn't."

The detective smiled in a puzzled manner. "Upon my word, Mr. Ainsleigh, you defend every one. First Tung-Yu, now Mr. Burgh, who is your enemy."

"I have so many enemies," said Rupert, with a shrug. "Tung-Yu told me that Burgh and Forge and Major Tidman were my enemies."

"That's a lie on Tung-Yu's part," chimed in the Major angrily. "I am not your enemy."

Rupert turned on him quickly. "Prove it, then," he said sharply, "by stating that I was with you on the beach last night after eleven."

"Oh, oh!" cried Rodgers, smiling, "so you can prove an alibi after all, Mr. Ainsleigh."

"Yes," said Rupert shortly. "But I did not wish to speak, until I heard what Major Tidman had to say."

Rodgers shook his head. "You have too nice a sense of honor," was his remark, "or else you are very deep."

Rupert did not reply. His eyes were fixed on the Major's face, which changed to various colors. "You knew my father well, Tidman?"

"Yes. We were old friends—good friends," faltered the other.

"Do you know how he died?"

"No, I do not." The Major wiped his face. "I can safely say I do not."

"But you know he was murdered."

The Major started. "Who told you that?"

"Tung-Yu, and you know Tung-Yu, who might have explained the circumstances of my father's death to you."

"He did not," said Tidman earnestly; "but I heard

that Mr. Ainsleigh did die by violence. I don't know under what circumstances."

"This is all very well, gentlemen," said the detective, "but it does not help me."

"It may help you, Mr. Rodgers. The murder of Miss Wharf is connected with this fan, and the Major can tell you about his Canton adventure, which has to do with it also."

Major Tidman turned gray and his face looked fearful. "I came to tell you, Rupert," he said, trying to be calm, "but it won't help this man," he nodded toward Rodgers, "to find the assassin."

"We'll see about that," replied Rodgers briskly; "let us go in and sit down. The fan is at the bottom of this business, and when I learn all about it, I may know how to act."

The Major shrugged his plump shoulders and walked toward the open French window. When he passed through to the library, the detective and Ainsleigh followed. In a few minutes they were comfortably seated. Rupert asked the two if they would have some refreshments, and receiving a reply in the affirmative, rang the bell. "Though mind you, Mr. Ainsleigh," said Rodgers, "this drinking a glass of wine doesn't stop me from arresting you, if I see fit."

"You can set your mind at rest," said Rupert coldly. "I have no wish to tie you down to a bread and salt treaty. Some wine, Mrs. Pettley."

The housekeeper, who had entered, was as plump as ever, but her face looked yellow, and old, and haggard, and there was a terrified look in her eyes. In strange contrast to her usual volubility, she did not speak a word, but dropping a curtsey, went out.

"That woman looks scared," said the detective.

"She *is* scared," assented Rupert; "we have a ghost here, Mr. Rodgers—the ghost of a monk, and Mrs. Pettley thought she saw it last night."

"Really," said the detective, with good-humored contempt, "she *thought* she saw a ghost. What nonsense!"

"No, sir. It ain't nonsense."

It was the housekeeper who spoke. Having seen the Major coming up the avenue, she knew that he would require his usual glass of port and therefore had prepared the tray while the conversation was taking place on the terrace. This accounted for her quick return, and she set down the tray with the jingling glasses and decanter as she spoke. "It was a ghost, sure enough," said Mrs. Pettley, when the small table was placed before the three gentlemen; "the ghost of Abbot Raoul. I've seen him times and again, but never so plainly as last night. It was between eleven and twelve," added Mrs. Pettley, without waiting for permission to speak, "and I sat up for Master Rupert here. I took a walk outside, it being fine and dry, and like a fool I went into the abbey."

"Why shouldn't you go there?" asked Rodgers.

"Because Abbot Raoul always walks where he was burnt," replied Mrs. Pettley, "and there he was sure enough. No moonlight could I see, but the stars gave a faint light, and he was near the square—the accursed square where they burnt the poor soul. I gave one screech as he swept past in his long robes and a cowl, and when I come to myself on the damp grass he was gone. I hurried in and told Pettley, who came out and searched, but bless you," went on the housekeeper with contempt, "he couldn't find a thing that had gone back to the other world—not he."

"It was a dream, Mrs. Pettley," said Rupert soothingly.

"No, sir. Trouble is coming to the Ainsleighs, as always does when the Abbot walks. And this morning I went out and found this," and Mrs. Pettley, fishing in her capacious pocket, produced a small stick which smelt like cinnamon. Round it was a roll of scarlet paper inscribed with queer characters. Rupert stretched out his hand to take it, but the detective anticipated him.

"It's a joss-stick," said Rodgers. "I've seen them in the Whitechapel opium dens. Humph! Why should the ghost of an old monk use a joss-stick, like the Chinese?"

Before any one could reply, Mrs. Pettley gave a cry, "I told you trouble was coming, Master Rupert, dear," she said, with the tears streaming from her fat face; "and anything to do with that weary Chiner where your poor pa lost his life always do bring trouble. Oh, dear me," she put her silk apron to her eyes and walked slowly out of the room. "I must tell my John. He may be able to say what's coming, as he have a gift of prophecy, that he have."

When Mrs. Pettley closed the door after her, the three men looked at one another. "Do you believe in this ghost, Mr. Ainsleigh?" asked the detective, examining the joss-stick.

Rupert did not give a direct answer. "I don't know what to believe, Mr. Rodgers. Our family traditions have always pointed to the walking of Abbot Raoul before trouble, and it might be so. I have never seen the ghost myself, though."

"Your ghost is a Chinaman," said the detective, tapping the stick.

"But what would a Chinaman be doing in the cloisters?"

"Ah! That's what we've got to find out. There was a yacht in Marport Harbor last night, which came at midday, and departed in a hurry after midnight. Burgh says he believes Tung-Yu went away in her, after committing the murder."

"Even if he did," said Rupert calmly, "that does not show how the joss-stick came here, or why a Chinaman should be masquerading as a monk, for that, I take it, is your meaning."

"It is. I believe there were other Chinamen on board that boat," was the detective's reply. "Perhaps this man Hwei came to the Abbey."

"He might have come," said Ainsleigh carelessly.

"Or Tung-Yu," went on Rodgers.

"No," said the Major, who had kept silent all this time, but had observed everything. "It was not Tung-Yu's day."

Rodgers turned on him. "What do you mean by that?"

The Major settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "I'll tell you my adventure at Canton first," he said, "and then you may understand. I can't get to the bottom of the matter myself, for why Lo-Keong should have a private god of good luck is more than I can tell."

The others looked at him, amazed at this queer speech. "What is this private god?" asked the detective.

"I don't know, save that it is called Kwang-Ho."

Rupert started. "That was the god mentioned in the advertisement."

"Yes, so it was," replied the Major quietly, "but just you wait and hear my story. It may lead to something being discovered."

"One moment, Mr. Ainsleigh. Show me the advertisement."

Rupert rose, and going to the writing-desk took therefrom the slip he had cut from the paper. Rodgers read it quietly. "I see. Here is mentioned the doom of the god, Kwang-Ho."

"Lo-Keong's private god of good luck," said the Major.

"Are there private as well as public gods in China?"

Tidman looked perplexed. "I can't say. I know nothing. Wait and hear what I can tell." He settled himself again and began to speak rapidly. "I was in Canton seven years ago," said he; "I had made my money here, and didn't intend to travel again. But Miss Wharf persuaded me to go to China, to see if I could find out why Markham Ainsleigh had been killed."

Rupert looked astonished. "Why, she hated my father."

"She loved him first and hated him later," said Tidman quietly; "a fine woman was poor Miss Wharf. I was in love with her—"

"I never knew that, Tidman."

"I was, though," said the Major, "and Miss Pewsey hated me for being in love with her. I spoke badly of Miss Wharf to you, Ainsleigh, because I was angered with her—"

"You called her a mass of granite."

"And so she is," said the Major angrily; "she promised to marry me if I went to China and learned how your father came by his death. I did go, but I came back without learning more than that he was murdered, so Miss Wharf refused to keep her promise. I believe it was that Pewsey cat's fault."

"Well—well—go on," said Rodgers, looking at his watch, "all this business is very round-about. I want to get on with my work."

"This may have to do with it," said the Major smartly.

"Well, I was in Canton, and intended to go up to the Kan-Su province to make inquiries. I met Forge in Canton. He had just come from Pekin, and showed me round. He laughed at the idea that Markham had died by violence, and said it was dysentery."

"So he always said," murmured Rupert, who listened intently.

"And told a lie," retorted Tidman; "however, I believed him, but all the same I intended to make inquiries at the mine of the Hwei River in the Kan-Su province. But I stopped in Canton with Forge for a time, as he said he would go up with me. In some way the fact of my trying to learn the truth about Markham's death got about."

"No doubt Forge told it to others," suggested Rupert.

"I don't know. I never got to the bottom of the business. But one day a half-starved Chinaman stopped me in the street, and told me he could explain, if I came with him. I went to a miserable house in a low part of the city. The man closed the door, and then drew a fan from his breast—"

"The fan in question?" asked Rodgers, making a note.

"Yes—the very article. He told me that this fan would reveal the truth, and offered it to me."

"For money?"

"No. He refused to take a penny. He seemed anxious to get rid of the fan, and kept looking round everywhere as though he thought some one might be listening. I asked him how the fan could tell about the death, but all he said was, that it could."

"But in what way?" asked Ainsleigh, puzzled.

"I really don't know," said the Major, with an air of fatigue. "I am telling you all I know. I took the fan and

cleared, and got home safely enough. Then I hid away the fan—where, it doesn't matter; but I have travelled so much that I always keep a secret place for money and valuables. I placed the fan there, though I really didn't know what to make of the matter. After a few days I came to my rooms to find that everything had been ripped open and smashed and searched—"

"And the fan was gone," said Rodgers.

"Not it. They—whosoever they were who searched—could not find my hiding-place. Well, a day or two later, as I was walking along the street at night, I was seized up and gagged, and carried to some low Chinese house. There a Chinaman examined me, and asked me what I had done with the fan—"

"What sort of a man was he?" asked Rupert; "would you know him again?"

The Major looked doubtful. "Chinamen are all so alike," he said, "but this chap had only one eye, and was a villanous-looking beast. He declared that he knew the first Celestial had given me the fan, and that he wanted it. I refused to give it up. He took out a knife, and said he would slice me up. Oh," broke off the Major, looking gray and old, "however shall I forget that terrible moment, Ainsleigh? Do you wonder that I shudder to relate this adventure, and that I refuse to speak of it? I was in that miserable place, in the midst of a horde of Chinamen, bound and helpless, with a knife at my throat. I never did care for death," said Tidman boldly, "but to be cut slowly into slices was more than I could stand."

"Why didn't you give up the fan, then?" asked Rodgers.

"Because I made up my mind that, slicing or no slicing,

I wasn't going to be bullied by a lot of heathen devils. The position was awful, but I'm an Englishman, and I resolved to hold off to the last moment. I dare say I would have given up the fan after all, as the one-eyed brute began to cut me up. I lost a big toe—"

"Oh," said Rupert, while Rodgers shook his head, "did this man cut a toe off?"

"Yes—my big toe. I was about to give in, when suddenly a small Chinese boy dressed in red—queerly enough, as the Chinese don't go in much for that color—appeared and said something. The one-eyed Chinaman scowled, and put his knife away. Then he cleared out with the boy and his other friends and I was left alone. Then with the loss of blood, and the pain of my toe, I fainted."

"No wonder," said Ainsleigh, "I don't blame you. Well?"

"Well, then I came to my senses in my own room. Forge was with me and said that he had traced me to the hovel and had rescued me with the aid of the Canton police. He declared that I would have to leave Canton at once, or this one-eyed Chinaman would be after me. I agreed, and with Forge I went that very day on board a homeward-bound steamer. I thanked Forge for having helped me, and he asked if I would give him the fan as a reward. I refused, as I wanted to know how it could tell about Markham's death. Forge said that if I kept possession of the fan the one-eyed Chinaman would track me to England and kill me. But I held out till I got to Marport. Then I grew weary of Forge worrying me, particularly as he promised to do what he could to learn the secret of the fan, and help me to marry Miss Wharf. So he took the fan, and then, as you know, Ainsleigh, he took it out to

China again, where it fell into the hands of a pirate from whom Clarence Burgh received it."

"But how did it get from Dr. Forge's hands into those of the pirate?" asked Rodgers curiously.

"I don't know; you can ask Forge. He lives here."

The detective took a note of the doctor's address. "That's all right," he said; "there's no doubt the poor lady was killed to procure this fan. Did you tell her of your adventure?"

"No," said the Major with a shudder. "I merely said that I could not learn how Markham was killed and she refused to marry me. I did not care about speaking of the adventure. You know how the fan came into Miss Wharf's possession, Mr. Rodgers?"

"Yes," the detective nodded; "Mr. Burgh told me, but I'll have another talk with him. Humph! It seems to me that one of these Chinamen killed Miss Wharf, and that the tie was used to lay the blame on Mr. Ainsleigh here."

"Well," said Ainsleigh, drawing a breath, "I am glad to hear that you don't suspect me, but I can't think that Tung-Yu stole the tie, even though he did see me place it in the coat."

"I'll look after that cloak-room attendant," said Rodgers, making another note, "and he'll have to give an account of himself. But I don't see what this private god Kwang-Ho has to do with the matter."

"I can only tell you this," said Major Tidman: "I had a cold last night and stopped in my room. But I heard that Tung-Yu was down the stairs, and, as I knew him in Canton, I went to have a look for him. He was a pleasant companion in Canton."

"Did you tell him about the fan and your adventure?"

"No, Ainsleigh, and I was annoyed that you should have let slip that I had such an adventure. I don't want to be mixed up in the matter; Tung-Yu is nice enough, but if he has to do with the fan he is quite capable of turning nasty and making things unpleasant for me. But I mentioned about his advertisement, and how I came to know of it through you. He confessed that Lo-Keong had lost the fan and wished it back again, as it had to do with some family business. The finding of it was referred to the god Kwang-Ho, and the priest of the god said that two men were to search for the fan."

"Hwei and Tung-Yu."

"Yes. They were to search on alternate days. If Hwei found it he was to kill the person from whom he got it. If it was Tung-Yu's day he was to give the fortunate person five thousand pounds."

"And whose day was it on the night of the crime?"

"Hwei's," said the Major; "that was why Tung-Yu could not buy the fan when Miss Wharf offered it to him."

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE INQUEST.

WHEN Mr. Orlando Rodgers of the C.I.D. rolled into the Superintendent's office the next day to relate what he had heard, he was not so glib as usual. After sleeping on the extraordinary tale he had heard from Major Tidman, and considering the fragments imparted by Clarence Burgh and young Ainsleigh, he came to look on the matter as something to do with the Arabian Nights. The fan which the deceased lady had carried at the ball was certainly gone, and the whole of these marvellous matters connected with China hung on the fan. But Miss Wharf may have been murdered for some other reason, and Rodgers was half inclined, when looking into the case in the cold searching morning light, to abandon the fan theory. But he delayed doing this until he had consulted with Superintendent Young, who looked after the Marport police.

"What do you think of it?" he asked, when his tale was told. The Superintendent was a tall, thin man with a cold eye and a distrustful manner. He believed only half he saw, and absolutely nothing he heard. Consequently when Rodgers ended, and his opinion was asked, he sniffed disdainfully, and put on his most official expression. "It's a fairy tale," said Young in his dry voice, which was like the creaking of a rusty wheel.

"Well, now, the woman was murdered."

"But not for this fan, Mr. Rodgers."

"Then what motive do you think?—"

"I don't undertake to say, sir. Let us gather all the evidence we can and submit it to an intelligent jury at the inquest. It takes place to-day at the public house near the corner of the Cliff Road and not far from Ivy Lodge. When the jury has inspected the body it will sit with the Coroner at the Bull's Head."

"A Chinaman calling himself Tung-Yu was at the ball, you know," said Rodgers, unwilling to abandon the theory in spite of his doubts.

"Where is he now?"

"I can't say. Mr. Christopher Walker brought him down, and I went to see that young gentleman before he departed for business this morning. He told me that Tung-Yu was a clerk in the same firm of tea merchants as he was employed with, and had not been at the office since he left to come to the ball. Mr. Walker last saw Tung-Yu at the door of the hotel, looking out across the pier."

"Well," said Young dryly.

"That yacht was there," went on Rodgers, "and showed a green light, so it's just possible that Mr. Burgh may be right and that the Chinaman did steam away in her."

"Well, then, search for the yacht."

"I intend to, and when I find her—"

"Mr. Tung-Yu will have an explanation. No, Mr. Rodgers," said the Superintendent, rising, "I can't believe all this business is about a trifle such as this fan. Some more serious motive is at the bottom of this murder. Now, Mr. Ainsleigh's tie—"

"I can explain that," said the detective, and he did.

Young listened disbelievingly. "So he says," was his comment.

"But I don't think Mr. Ainsleigh is the sort of man to commit a brutal crime like this, and in so public a place."

"Every one's capable of committing a crime if there's anything to be gained," was the Superintendent's philosophy, "and Mr. Ainsleigh's very agreeable manner, with which you appear to be struck, may be a mask to hide an evil nature."

"Oh, rubbish! begging your pardon, Mr. Young. Look at this joss-stick," and Rodgers held it out; "that was found in the ruins of Royabay Abbey, so you see some Chinaman must be mixed up in the job. I am beginning to believe that the tale may be true, after all."

"It's too wild—too far-fetched. I can't believe it."

"Because you haven't imagination."

"We don't want imagination in this matter, Mr. Rodgers. Facts, sir."

Rodgers got up and put on his hat. "Well, we'll not be able to agree, I can see that," said he, "and as the case is in my hands, I am going away to look after evidence."

"Why not arrest Mr. Ainsleigh?"

"Because the evidence against him is not sufficiently strong," the detective sat down again. "See here, Mr. Superintendent, if I so chose I could manufacture a case against three of these people at least, and give it to them pretty strong, too. Supposing, for the sake of theorizing, mind, we say Mr. Ainsleigh killed the woman—"

"Which I am inclined to think he did, on the tie's evidence."

"Very good, I can show you how strong you can make the case against him, Mr. Young. This young man was at the ball, he hated the deceased and she hated him on account of the difficulty of the marriage with Miss Rayner.

Ainsleigh wants money badly, and might have killed the old woman to get the fan and sell it for five thousand pounds. Also by marrying Miss Rayner, who will inherit Miss Wharf's money, he gets rid of a mortgage that's troubling him. What was easier for him than to pretend to put the silk scarf in his coat pocket, so as to blind those who saw him do it, and then to lure Miss Wharf out on to those steps and scrag her? Then he could pass the fan to Tung-Yu, who wanted it, and arrange about the money being paid. After that and when Tung-Yu had gone off to the yacht, Mr. Ainsleigh could slip back into the ball-room and assist in finding the body. And remember, he says he was strolling on the beach smoking, between the hours of eleven and twelve, and won't prove an alibi, though between ourselves I think he can through Major Tidman."

"Well," said Young dryly, "doesn't this go to prove his guilt?"

"I can prove Tung-Yu's in the same way," said Rodgers coolly; "he was in the cloak-room when Mr. Ainsleigh placed the scarf in the coat. He could easily have stolen it, as these Chinamen are clever thieves, and have then lured Miss Wharf on to the steps under the pretence of treating about the fan. Suddenly he slips the scarf round her throat before she can cry out, goes down the steps and on to the beach where a boat is waiting for him, and by now may be on his way to his employer, the Mandarin Lo-Keong."

"It sounds feasible, I admit, but—"

"One moment," went on Rodgers eagerly; "quite as strong a case can be made out against Major Tidman. He did not come to the ball, but lurked in his room all the

evening. Yet he came down to see Tung-Yu—what about?—to sell the fan of course—"

"You can't prove that."

"Am I proving anything? I am simply showing you what strong cases can be built up out of nothing. Well, then, Tidman sees the scarf put in the coat by a young man who he knows is at enmity with the deceased, and takes it out again. He gets Miss Wharf to come on to the terrace—any pretext will do, as he is her lover and her old friend. There he strangles her on the steps, and taking the fan passes it along to the Chinaman who makes for the yacht. So you see if I choose I can build up a case against each of these three gentlemen, and each equally strong. Why, if I had a mind to entangle young Mr. Burgh in the affair I could do so."

"But Tung-Yu, Mr. Burgh, and Major Tidman might prove alibis."

"So they might, and Mr. Ainsleigh might do so also."

"He has not done so yet, and if he was in danger he would."

"Quite so," said Rodgers quickly, and seeing the slip, "and his very reluctance to prove an alibi—for surely some one besides Tidman must have seen him on the beach—shows me he is innocent. However, this isn't business, Mr. Young, so I'll go and see what evidence I can gather."

So to Dr. Forge went the detective, feeling very bewildered over the case. And small blame to him, for the matter was surely most perplexing. It is only in novels that the heaven-born detective (in the confidence of the author) displays wonderful cleverness in finding clews where none exist. But a flesh and blood worker like Rodgers

had to puzzle out the matter in real life as best he could. He was not at all sanguine that he would run down the assassin of Miss Wharf. On the face of it, Rupert Ainsleigh appeared to be guilty, and Rodgers doubted his guilt for this very reason. "I believe one of these Chinamen did it," said Rodgers, as he rang Forge's bell.

Dr. Forge was within, and consented at once to see the detective. When the two were in the Chinese room, Rodgers unfolded himself, and asked Forge, who knew the Chinese character, what he thought.

"My dear sir, the case is plain," said Forge calmly. "Tung-Yu gave Hwei the office, and lured Miss Wharf on to the steps where Hwei strangled her with the scarf stolen by Tung-Yu so as to throw suspicion on Mr. Ainsleigh."

"Humph! It looks like it," said Rodgers musingly. "So you believe this wild story of Major Tidman's?"

"I *know* it is true," said Forge quietly. "I helped him to get free as he related. I was a partner with Mr. Markham Ainsleigh in the mine on the Hwei River. I went to Pekin about a concession, and while I was away Mr. Ainsleigh died of dysentery. As to the fan—I can't exactly say. I never knew of this private god business, but it's the kind of thing Lo-Keong might invent. He is a very superstitious man and, like Napoleon, he believes in his star. He was concerned in the Boxer rebellion, but afterward he joined the Court party of the Dowager Empress who is now all-powerful. I never saw the fan in his hand, but it might have to do with a secret."

"What kind of a secret?"

"I can't say unless it has to do with Lo-Keong's political fortunes. He has many enemies who envy his rapid rise.

These enemies probably stole the fan to ruin him. How this coolie, who gave it to Major Tidman, got hold of it I don't know. But he was glad to get rid of it, which makes me think the story of the alternate days and the blessing of the god Kwang-Ho might be true. The Chinese do not think as we do, Mr. Rodgers, and have their own way of settling these matters. The attack on Tidman when he had the fan in Canton shows clearer than ever that it was wanted by Lo-Keong's enemies. He gave it to me—"

"Why did you want it?"

"For two reasons," said Forge quietly; "in the first place, from what happened to Tidman I saw that while he held the fan he was in danger—"

"But then you were in the same danger," objected the detective.

"I was, and I expected trouble. But I was better able to deal with the matter than Tidman, as I understand the Chinese character. I got the fan in London and locked it up in yonder cabinet. I thought it was there all the time, and when I found it gone I was quite annoyed, as Major Tidman will tell you. Then I recollected that I had taken it back to China to give to Lo-Keong. That is my second reason, Mr. Rodgers. I knew I could get a concession I wanted through Lo-Keong's influence, and I did. So the fan went back to him."

"And you forgot that you had given it."

"I did. It seems strange to you, but as I told Tidman and Miss Pewsey, my memory is impaired by opium smoking. However, that is the story of the fan, and Burgh got it from the hand of the dead pirate. How the pirate came possessed of it I can't say. Apparently Lo-Keong lost it again."

"He couldn't have valued it much, if he lost it so often."

"He valued it at five thousand pounds and more," said the Doctor dryly; "how it was lost I can't say. I may find out when I go to China again in a few months. Lo-Keong is in Pekin, and as we are friends he will tell me, and show me the fan again."

"Ah. Then you believe—"

"I believe it is on its way to Lo-Keong, and that Tung-Yu and Hwei came together down here to get it. When only one was on the spot this god business of alternate days made the matter difficult. With both together, the owner of the fan was bound to be killed or made rich. Unfortunately for Miss Wharf the day or night was Hwei's, and he carried out the order of the god Kwang-Ho by strangling her."

"Well," said Rodgers, rising, "all I can say is that I'm glad I do not live in China. How much of this is to be made public?"

"My advice to you is to make nothing public, or as little as you can," said Dr. Forge dryly; "you see how persistent these Chinamen are. You make trouble and you may be killed also. Your being in England won't save you any more than it saved Miss Wharf, poor soul."

"I shall do my duty in spite of all," said Rodgers coolly. "I am not going to be frightened by a couple of Chinese brutes."

"Very clever brutes," said Forge softly, but Rodgers took no notice and marched away with his head in the air. Come what may, he was determined to punish the assassin of Miss Wharf, and if it was Hwei, the man would have to be caught.

"I'll go to Pekin myself for him," said Rodgers angrily. "I'm not going to be bested by these barbarians."

Little that was new came to his hand before the inquest, which was a comparatively tame affair. The jury inspected the body and then adjourned to the Bull's Head to hear the case. Rodgers set forth what evidence he had gained, but touched as lightly as possible on the Chinese business. He called Dr. Forge, who deposed to having examined the body, and asserted that Miss Wharf had been killed between eleven and twelve. She must have been strangled almost instantaneously as, had she cried out, she would have been overheard by those on the terrace. This evidence caused but little sensation.

When Rupert was called, however, all were excited. He deposed as to the scarf, which he had received from Olivia, and said what he had done with it. He declared that he had been walking on the beach smoking, and only returned to the ball-room shortly before midnight, when the body was discovered. He stated that he had spoken to Major Tidman on the beach. And thus proved an alibi clearly enough.

The rest of the evidence was not very important. Chris Walker told how he had brought Tung-Yu to the ball and handed in a slip of advertisement, and then Rupert was recalled to tell what he knew. Tidman related his interview with Tung-Yu and described how both had seen Rupert place the tie in the overcoat pocket. Then it appeared that the whole of the case turned on the fact that the scarf had been removed from the pocket. No one knew. Miss Pewsey said that Rupert took it; but her evidence was so obviously prejudiced that the jury would not believe all she said.

Lotty Dean, who was at the ball, declared that she saw Miss Wharf cross the terrace about eleven and go toward the floral arch on the other side of which were the steps. She was quite alone, and seemed tranquil; "she was fanning herself at the moment," said the witness.

"Ah!" said the coroner, "then she had the fan at that time."

"It was gone when we found the body," put in Miss Pewsey, and was rebuked for speaking out of order.

The interest of the case turned on the evidence of Dalham, the attendant in the cloak-room. He was a dissipated-looking man, and gave his evidence very unwillingly. Owing to his having left the cloak-room at Burgh's request, Rupert, as he threatened to do, had reported him to the manager and Mr. Dalham had been dismissed. This loss of his situation did not make him any the sweeter toward Ainsleigh, but all the same he could not state on his oath that the young man had returned to take the tie again from the pocket. Nor had the Chinaman or Major Tidman returned. Dalham knew the Major well and, as he phrased it, "would have spotted him at once," while the gay dress of Tung-Yu would have been equally conspicuous had he attempted to meddle with a coat which did not belong to him.

"You did not leave the room again?" asked the coroner.

"I only left it once," said Dalham. "Because Mr. Burgh and Mr. Ainsleigh wanted to fight."

"We've heard about that, and it has nothing to do with the case," said the coroner. "But you were in the room the rest of the evening?"

"I've said so a dozen times, sir," growled the badgered

man. "Lots of people came for their things and some late arrivals left theirs, but I was at my post all the time, except that once, when I left Mr. Burgh with Mr. Ainsleigh. I never saw Major Tidman nor Mr. Ainsleigh nor the Chinaman touch the cloak."

The coroner called Burgh and asked him if he was alone in the room at any time. Clarence frankly admitted that he was. "But as I never saw Ainsleigh place the tie in the coat and never knew that he possessed such a tie, I don't see how you can accuse me." Much more evidence was given, but it all led to no result. Finally the jury, having heard much more of the Chinese story than Rodgers approved of, brought in a verdict against Tung-Yu. Hwei they could say nothing about, as he had not been present. But Tung-Yu wanted the fan and the fan had disappeared, while Tung-Yu was also absent. "Wilful murder against Tung-Yu" was the verdict, and on hearing the evidence, and on reading all that had been said in the papers, the general public agreed with the verdict. Under the circumstances no other could have been given. Only one person dissented.

"It was that Ainsleigh who killed dearest Sophia," said Miss Pewsey.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WILL.

THE funeral of Miss Wharf was attended by many people. Of course all her friends came with the usual wreaths of flowers, but owing to the tragic circumstances of her death many strangers were present. She was buried in the family vault with much ceremony, and then the mourners departed talking of the crime. It was the general opinion that Tung-Yu—who had not yet been heard of—was responsible for the death, and that he had sailed away in the Stormy Petrel. Rodgers having returned to town after the inquest was making inquiries about the yacht. When he discovered her, he hoped to learn particulars as to the flight of Tung-Yu.

These many days Rupert had not seen Olivia, although he had called at Ivy Lodge. But Miss Pewsey, who took charge of everything in her usual meddlesome way, would not allow him to be admitted. Olivia did not even know of his visit. She remained in her room and mourned the death of her aunt. Miss Wharf had certainly been a good friend to her, but she could not be said to have been a kindly aunt. All the same Olivia's conscience pricked her for having secretly married Rupert. As she now thought, she should have told her aunt. But the marriage was decided upon in a hurry, and when the girl had been more than usually piqued by the insulting speeches of Miss Wharf. However, the old woman was dead, and Olivia, little as she loved her, wept for her tragic end.

Miss Rayner, during her mourning, read the evidence given at the inquest, and wondered why she had not been called as a witness, if only to prove that she had given the scarf to Rupert. She thought it extraordinary that Tung-Yu should have used the tie to strangle Miss Wharf, and could not think how it came into his possession. After some thought she concluded that he had taken the scarf from Rupert's pocket, so as to implicate him in the crime, and had bribed Dalham the attendant, who certainly was not above being bribed, to say nothing about the matter. If this were the case, Dalham would probably blackmail Tung-Yu for the rest of his life, as he was just the kind of rascal to make money in shady ways. Then it occurred to Olivia that as Tung-Yu had sailed for China, presumably in the yacht, Dalham would not be able to make a milch cow of him. However, whether Tung-Yu was guilty or not she cared little. Rupert was safe in spite of the evidence of the scarf, and so long as he escaped being arrested the girl felt perfectly happy.

After the funeral Olivia came down-stairs again, and found Miss Pewsey looking after things as usual. The little old maid was most polite, and it seemed as though she was now anxious to make much of Olivia, thinking she would inherit the money. Miss Pewsey had not a shilling to bless herself with, and for years had lived on the bounty of Miss Wharf. Now that Olivia was to be the mistress of Ivy Lodge, Miss Pewsey appeared desirous of making herself pleasant, so that she might remain. Olivia saw through her newly born politeness, and, although she disliked the woman, was not averse to her remaining for a time at least.

"I should be glad for you to remain altogether," ex-

plained Olivia, when matters came to be discussed. "But of course now that my aunt is gone I may marry Mr. Ainsleigh."

"Oh, he'll marry you quick enough for your money," snapped Miss Pewsey, "not but what he's a handsome young fellow, but—"

"Don't run down Rupert," interrupted Olivia, flushing. "I love him. You have never been just to him."

Miss Pewsey coughed. "I don't think he is a very good young man."

"I hate good young men," said Olivia. "Mr. Chris Walker is one of those who never cost his mother a single pang. Why my aunt should wish me to marry such a milksop I can't understand."

"Well, then, why not marry Clarence?" asked the old maid; "he is not a milksop and has cost his mother—poor soul—many a pang. And he loves you dearly, Olivia. I should think you would be able to live very nicely on five hundred a year and with this house rent free."

"If I come into possession of the property, that is."

"Oh, I am sure you will," said Miss Pewsey effusively. "To whom should dear Sophia leave the money if not to you, her nearest relative?"

"She might have left it to you, for she loved you, while she only tolerated me."

Miss Pewsey threw up her mittened hands with a cry of dismay. "Oh, my dear, there's no chance of my being so lucky. Sophia was very close about money matters—"

"Surely not with you, Miss Pewsey. She always consulted you in everything. You had great influence over her."

"If so I made no use of it for my own benefit," said Miss

Pewsey, with great dignity. "Sophia never consulted me about her wills. I know she made several, and dictated the last just a week before her death. While she was confined to her room with that cold, you know, Olivia. I suppose," Miss Pewsey tittered, "I suppose she wanted to be amused."

"I shouldn't think making one's will was amusing," said Olivia dryly; "however, the lawyer will be here this afternoon to read the will, and we shall know if I inherit."

"I am sure you will get the money. And dear, you won't forget your poor Lavinia," purred Miss Pewsey. "Let me remain here with you until you marry Mr. Ainsleigh, or until I marry Theophilus."

"Are you really going to marry Dr. Forge?" asked Miss Rayner, looking with secret amazement at the withered face and shrunken form of Miss Pewsey, and wondering what the doctor could see in her to make her his wife.

"I really am," said Miss Pewsey emphatically, and with a shrewd look in her eyes. "And I see that you think it is ridiculous at my age to marry. Also, I am not handsome, I know. All the same, Theophilus is willing to make me Mrs. Forge, and I dare say I'll grace the position well enough. It isn't love," added Miss Pewsey; "at our age, dear, that would be too absurd. We are simply entering into a partnership. He has money and I have brains."

"Dr. Forge has brains also."

"Not so much brain power as I have. I am not lovely, I know, dear, but I am clever," and Miss Pewsey drew herself up proudly. "Why, poor dear Sophia would never have died worth so much money but for me. Ah, if she had only given me that fan when I asked her, she would not have been killed, and I should have got five thousand

pounds and more from Tung-Yu for her. But she would keep the fan," Miss Pewsey squeezed out a tear, "and so met with her doom. That nasty Chinaman." Miss Pewsey shook a small fist. "I wish he could hang."

Olivia looked at her. "I heard that you disagreed with the verdict, Miss Pewsey."

"Meaning that I said Mr. Ainsleigh was guilty," snapped the old maid; "well, I did, dear, but I have changed my mind."

Miss Rayner did not believe this, for Miss Pewsey looked very malignant as she spoke. Her change of opinion was made merely to adapt herself to circumstances, and to retain a home until such time as her marriage with Forge would enable her to dispense with Miss Rayner's help. However, Olivia did not argue the point. She wished to keep on good terms with the old maid until Rupert declared the secret marriage. Then she could go to the Abbey, and leave Miss Pewsey behind with all other disagreeable things.

With Pastor, the solicitor of the deceased lady, came Clarence Burgh and Dr. Forge. Lady Jabe, more manly than ever, appeared with Chris Walker, who had taken a holiday on purpose to hear the will read, and Lady Jabe explained this to Miss Pewsey in a whisper. "I know that poor Sophia wished Chris to marry Olivia," she said, "so I thought the will might state that the money would be left to her on such a condition. I therefore made Chris ask for a holiday, so that he might hear of his good fortune."

"Let us hope it will come," said Miss Pewsey dryly, "but fortune or no fortune, Olivia will stick to young Ainsleigh."

"He is a nice young man, but poor."

"Chris is poor also. Yet you want him to marry Olivia."

"I think Chris has a better character than young Ainsleigh, who looks as though he has a will of his own. Now Chris has none. I have broken it, and Olivia as Mrs. Walker can order him about like a slave. I hope Sophia has made the will as I wished."

"You'll hear in a minute. For my part," added Miss Pewsey in her spiteful way, "I hope Sophia has left the money to Olivia, on condition that she marries Clarence, and keeps him at home."

"And keeps him on the income," corrected Lady Jabe, who did not at all approve of this speech. "No man should live on his wife."

"You propose that Chris should do so."

"Indeed no. He earns quite a good salary at the office, and I could live with the young couple to prevent waste."

"I am quite sure you would," said Miss Pewsey, "if you get the money."

Lady Jabe would have made a sharp reply as, Miss Wharf being dead, she was under no obligation to curry favor with Miss Pewsey. But at that moment she saw Chris talking to Olivia, and as the girl seemed deeply interested, she pointed out the two with her cane. "I see Chris is losing no time," she murmured, "such a lover as he is."

But had she heard Chris talking she would not have been so happy. The young man was simply replying to a question put by Olivia as to the whereabouts of Tung-Yu. "I really don't know where he is, Miss Rayner," said Chris earnestly. "There was a police-officer at our place

the other day inquiring. But Tung-Yu has not been near Kum-gum Li's since I took him to the ball. I believe he asked me to get him an invitation so that he might kill your aunt."

"Does Kum-gum Li know anything about him?" asked Olivia.

"No. He came with a letter of introduction from a mandarin—"

"Lo-Keong?"

"No. That is not the name—let me see—the mandarin Hop-Sing—"

"Ah," said Forge, who was listening, "Lo-Keong's rival."

"I never knew that. But Kum-gum Li gave Tung-Yu a place as extra clerk when he received the letter. He knows nothing more than what the letter explained."

"And what did it explain?" asked Forge with sudden interest.

"I can't tell you," replied Chris coldly; "I am not in the confidence of my employer, and if I were," he added, fixing an indignant eye on the sardonic face of the doctor, "I should say nothing."

"Quite right," replied Forge, not at all disconcerted; "you keep out of these Chinese affairs. There's danger in them."

"Connected with the fan?" demanded Olivia.

"Yes," said Forge slowly, "connected with the fan."

Olivia being a woman and curious, would have asked further questions, to which Dr. Forge might have hesitated to reply, but that Miss Pewsey called her dear Theophilus to her side. The will was about to be read and Miss Pewsey—so she said—wanted support. Forge crossed to the

withered little shrimp he had chosen, heaven knows why, for his wife, and sat down. The lawyer opened an envelope and took out a rustling parchment. Just as he cleared his throat, the door opened and the maid announced "Mr. Ainsleigh."

Miss Pewsey glared, and no one appeared glad to see him, Lady Jabe least of all, as she knew he was a powerful rival to Chris. But Rupert bowed to the company in silence, took no notice of their cold looks, and walked over to where Olivia sat, a little apart. He seated himself beside her. The girl smiled a little faintly, and then gazed straight before her. No one made any remark, as Pastor was beginning to read the will.

Miss Wharf, it appeared, died worth one thousand a year and the house and furniture and land of Ivy Lodge. Five hundred a year went to a distant relative, as Miss Wharf was unable to leave it to any one else, by reason of only having a life interest in this amount. Then a few personal bequests were left to Lady Jabe, to Chris Walker, and to some other friends. Ivy Lodge and the furniture, and the land it was built on, and the remaining five hundred a year was left to—Lavinia Pewsey. When the name was mentioned the little old maid quivered, and Olivia, pale and quiet, rose to her feet. In a moment Miss Pewsey, prepared for battle, was on her feet also, and the two women looked at one another.

"You knew of this will," said Olivia quietly.

"No," replied Miss Pewsey.

"You did. And all your paying court to me was a blind, so that I might not suspect Aunt Sophia had left the money to you."

"Dearest Sophia left the money to whom she chose,"

said Miss Pewsey, in a sharp, shrill voice; "do you mean to say that I exercised any undue influence over her?"

"I say nothing," was Olivia's reply; "but hard on me as my aunt was, I do not think she would have left me penniless, while the money which belonged to my family goes to a perfect stranger."

"A stranger," cried Miss Pewsey, tossing her head, "am I a stranger, indeed? I was hand and glove with dear Sophia when we were at school together. I gave up my life to her—"

"And you have got your reward," said Olivia bitterly.

"As you say," retorted Miss Pewsey, tossing her head again, "but the will is in order, and I had nothing to do with the making of it. I appeal to Mr. Pastor."

"Why, certainly," said the lawyer, looking on Olivia with something like pity. "Miss Wharf gave me instructions to make a new will, during the week before she met with her untimely end. Miss Pewsey was not in the room—"

"But no doubt she induced my aunt to cut me out of the will."

"No," cried Miss Pewsey, breathing very hard and looking more drab than ever. "I won't stand this. Your aunt had good cause to take the money from you—oh, you deceiving girl!"

At this Rupert suddenly rose and took Olivia's hand. He half guessed what was coming, and looked at the spiteful face of the heiress. Olivia stared. She could not understand. Miss Pewsey was about to speak, when Mr. Pastor intervened.

"May I be permitted to remark that I have not finished reading the will of the deceased lady?" said he sweetly.

"There's no more money to be disposed of," said Olivia bitterly; "my enemy has got it all."

Pastor made a gesture of silence to prevent Miss Pewsey bursting out into a volume of words. "There is no more money to be disposed of, as you say, Miss Rayner, but Miss Wharf sets forth in the will why she disinherited you."

"Ah," cried Olivia, a light breaking in upon her, and reading the truth in Miss Pewsey's look of triumph, "so my aunt knew—"

"She knew that you had secretly married the gentleman beside you."

Every one was on his or her feet by this time, and every look was directed toward Olivia. "Is this true?" asked Lady Jabe.

"Yes," cried Miss Pewsey, before either Rupert or Olivia could speak, "of course it is true. Let them deny it if they can. I heard Olivia say herself that she had been married at the registrar's."

Miss Rayner, or rather Mrs. Ainsleigh, turned on the little woman: "I should like to know when I said that to you, Miss Pewsey?"

"You never said it to me—oh, dear no," Miss Pewsey cried shrilly, "you were not straightforward enough. But I heard—oh, yes, I heard."

"Miss Wharf," said the lawyer, folding up the will, "told me that she learned of this from Miss Pewsey just before she called me in to make a new will. The five hundred a year was left to you, Miss—"

"Mrs. Ainsleigh," said Rupert quickly.

"Very good. To you, Mrs. Ainsleigh, by a former will. But on discovering the secret marriage, my client made a new will—this," he shook it, "and Miss Pewsey benefits."

"Miss Pewsey has every right to benefit," said Mrs. Ainsleigh in a clear, cold voice; "she has been well paid for being a spy."

"Spy!" shrilled Miss Pewsey, glaring, "yes, I was a spy in the interests of dearest Sophia. I followed you several times when you went to meet Mr. Ainsleigh near the flag-staff, and on the last occasion—"

"Ah," said Olivia tranquilly, "so I thought. I heard something moving. It was you, concealed. Rupert said it was a rat—perhaps he was right. Well, Miss Pewsey, you have gained your ends and now—"

"Now you leave my house," said the old maid, "yes, my house."

Olivia made no reply, but placed her hand within her husband's arm. Rupert conducted her toward the door. "Mrs. Ainsleigh's effects will be sent for," said he, looking at Miss Pewsey; "we will not trouble you further."

"But the law will trouble *you*," cried Miss Pewsey, "you—"

Rupert turned and looked at her. The venomous words died on her lips. She dropped into her chair, while Ainsleigh and the disinherited Olivia left Ivy Lodge to the woman who had schemed for it in so base a way.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

If Miss Wharf's tragic death made a great sensation in Marport, the announcement that Miss Rayner was married secretly to Ainsleigh of Royabay made a still greater one. Some people thought Olivia had behaved badly to her aunt, and these were confirmed in their belief by the story told by Miss Pewsey. But others considered the marriage to be quite romantic, and, knowing how Miss Wharf had tried to make her niece marry Clarence, were pleased that the girl had thus circumvented the schemes of the buccaneer. But, whether the critics were hostile or favorable, they were all equally anxious to call at Royabay and see its new mistress.

Mrs. Ainsleigh received them quietly, and with a dignity which compelled all to refrain from making remarks, unpleasant or otherwise. She settled down rapidly to her new position, and after a time every one was quite on her side. Certainly a few ill-disposed people agreed with Miss Pewsey, who could not say anything sufficiently bad about Mrs. Ainsleigh: but on the whole, people were anxious to welcome the new mistress of the great place of Marport. Rupert and Olivia appeared to be very happy, and, after all, as some one said, "the marriage was their own business."

A month after the installation of Olivia at Royabay, her husband received a visitor in the person of Dr. Forge. That melancholy man made his appearance one after-

noon when the young couple were in the garden, and therefore they could not refuse to see him. Olivia, had she been able, would certainly have declined the visit, as she was aware that Forge intended to marry Miss Pewsey next month. As it was, she had to be polite and she was coldly so. Rupert also was not very genial. From what John Pettley had said, and from what Tung-Yu had hinted, he began to think that Forge was not the friend he pretended to be, and consequently the young man was on his guard. Dr. Forge saw this, and seized the opportunity when Olivia went within—which she did as soon as politeness permitted—to speak to his quondam ward.

"We don't appear to be friends," said the doctor.

"I don't see how you can expect it," replied Rupert coldly; "you marry Miss Pewsey next month, and she has been and is Olivia's bitter enemy."

"I am aware that my future wife is prejudiced," said he deliberately, "but I assure you, Rupert, she did not scheme for that money."

Ainsleigh scoffed. "Why, she spied on Olivia and told Miss Wharf what we would rather had been kept silent."

"I don't think you acted quite fairly toward Miss Wharf."

"That is my business. I don't intend to defend myself," was the young man's reply; "did you come to discuss this matter?"

"No. I came to ask how this matter would affect your future."

"In what way?"

"In the way you stand with your creditors."

Rupert did not reply immediately. The two were walking on the lawn, but Rupert entered the door of the Abbey

and strolled round the ruins with Forge by his side. He mistrusted the man intensely. "I should like to know if you are my friend?" he asked, giving utterance to this mistrust.

"Surely I am," was the quiet reply; "why should you think me to be otherwise? Because I marry Miss Pewsey?"

"No. You can marry whom you choose. I have nothing to do with that, Dr. Forge. But when you were my guardian, why did you not tell me that the property was so encumbered?"

"I wanted your boyhood to be unclouded. And also," he added, seeing Rupert make a gesture of contempt, "I thought you might get money from China."

Rupert started. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well," said Forge deliberately and looking on the ground, "you know that your father and I invested in a gold mine on the Hwei River. Well, we worked it for a long time until your father died of dysentery—"

"Are you sure he died of dysentery?" asked Ainsleigh sharply.

"So far as I know, he did," was Forge's patient reply; "as I told you before, I was in Pekin when he died. But if you are in doubt you should go to China and ask Lo-Keong."

"What has he to do with it?"

"This much," said Forge quietly, "and I am telling you what I have kept hitherto from every living creature. Your father and I made money out of the mine—a great sum. I made the most—about ten thousand pounds, but your father made at least eight thousand."

"And where is that money?" asked Rupert anxiously.

"Lo-Keong has it. Yes! I went to Pekin to get a con-

cession with regard to buying or leasing more land. I left your father with Lo-Keong. He was at that time a kind of foreman. But also, he was in the confidence of the rebellious Boxer leaders. These threatened to undermine the power of the Dowager Empress, who was not then so strong as she is now. As a matter of fact, Lo-Keong himself was a leader of the Boxers. He came to us in disguise, and worked up, until he became our foreman; but he did this because he heard that the mine was paying, and wanted money—"

"Your money?" asked Ainsleigh, deeply interested.

"Yes, and the money belonging to your father—in all, eighteen thousand pounds. When I was at Pekin, your father, who did not understand the Chinese so well as I did, managed to make trouble—"

"In what way?"

"He interfered with the religion of the coolies in some way—a most disastrous thing to do. Lo-Keong took advantage of the riot and robbed your father of the eighteen thousand pounds."

"And killed my father."

"Ah," said Forge quietly, "I really can't say that. It was reported to me at Pekin that Markham had died of dysentery. He was buried near the mine. I was advised not to go back, as the Chinese were enraged against the foreign devils. Lo-Keong took the money and returned to his Boxers, where, with the money, he attained to even greater power than he formerly had possessed. Afterward he deserted his party and came on the side of the Empress Dowager. She is a clever woman and was glad to get him, so he speedily rose high at court. Now he is very powerful."

"And still holds my father's money."

"Precisely, and mine also. I have been to China again and again to try and make Lo-Keong give up this money, and then, I intended to pay you eight thousand pounds. But hitherto I have failed. I am about to make a last attempt, as I sail for Canton after Christmas. I had intended to go earlier, but I must marry Miss Pewsey and leave her in charge of my house, as Mrs. Forge, before I go. So now you know, Rupert, why I went so frequently to China."

"And what has the fan to do with all this?"

"Nothing, so far as I know. It is Lo-Keong's property and was a bequest which he values. I understand that there is some secret belonging to it, connected with political affairs, and which makes his enemies anxious to get hold of it."

"Didn't you know the secret when you possessed the fan?"

"No," said Forge viciously; "I wish I had known it. If it could have damaged Lo-Keong I certainly should have made every use of it. He keeps me out of ten thousand pounds, and it's through his influence with the Empress Dowager that I am prevented from working the mine further. It is a rich mine, and if I worked it I could make a fortune. But Lo-Keong stopped that. I was a fool not to use the fan, and make Lo-Keong give me the mine for it."

"But you *did* give him the fan."

Forge looked confused for a moment. "Yes, I did," said he after a pause; "that is, it was taken from me. I got it from Tidman in the way you know, and always expected trouble. But I expect Hwei and Tung-Yu did not find

out at the time that it had come to this country, so I was left alone. Had they discovered that I was the possessor I should have been killed—"

"Or you might have got a large sum of money."

"Quite so. It would have all depended if I gave the fan to Hwei or to Tung-Yu. I should have preferred the latter, but of course I never knew the different days appointed by the god."

"Then that business is really true."

"I believe it is. But I never knew much about it, till Tung-Yu told me. Then it was too late; Miss Wharf had the fan, and it was Hwei's day. He took advantage of the chance."

"Do you think he was here?"

"Yes. Certainly. He killed Miss Wharf."

"But the verdict said that Tung-Yu—"

"Pooh—pooh!" cried Forge, snapping his long fingers. "Tung-Yu would not have dared to disobey the order of Kwang-Ho the god. Hwei is the culprit, but I said as little as I could about that. I don't want to be entangled in the matter again. But one of the Chinamen has the fan, and by this time it is nearly at Pekin. There doesn't seem to be much chance of our getting that money, Rupert."

"You did give the fan to Lo-Keong?" reiterated Ainsleigh.

"Well, it was taken from me. I went to his palace and told him I would give him the fan in exchange for the eighteen thousand pounds. I then intended to come back and give you eight to clear off your mortgages, and resolved to live on the remaining ten, which are rightfully my own. But Lo-Keong had me seized, and the fan was taken from me. He then forbade me setting foot in China

again. But I am going, for all that," said Forge threateningly; "I shall go after Christmas. I am bound to get my money and yours."

"You kept that fan for a long time?"

"For two years only, and then when I thought everything had blown over I took it to Lo-Keong—with what result you know. Now then, I have been plain with you, Rupert. Surely you can see that I am your friend."

"Tung-Yu said you were not, Doctor."

"Naturally," replied Forge; "he wanted to make bad blood between us so that I should not tell you this story. How does he know—Tung-Yu I mean—but what you might not go to China and complain about Lo-Keong keeping this money?"

"I prefer to stop here with my wife," said Ainsleigh. "But *you* can complain."

"And be hanged, or sliced, or shot, or fried. No, thank you. Remember what kind of treatment Tidman met with at the hands of Hwei."

"What! Was he the one-eyed Chinaman?"

"Yes. He's the gentleman, and I hope he won't come your way. He is a beast. But by this time he and Tung-Yu are on their way back to their own land. And now, Rupert, I'll say good-by. As I am poor myself, lacking this ten thousand pounds, rightfully mine, which Lo-Keong detains, I can't help you. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get Miss Pewsey to extend that mortgage."

"No, thank you all the same," said Ainsleigh, throwing back his head. "I don't want to be indebted to your wife."

"She is not my wife *yet*," said Forge significantly.

"But you intend to marry her."

"Yes—yes—quite so." Forge looked queerly at Rupert as though about to say something. Then he changed his mind and walked away rapidly without saying good-by. Rupert returned to the house and told his wife all that had taken place. She was still doubtful of Forge's good intentions.

"A decent man would not marry that wicked little woman."

"Well," said Rupert doubtfully, "from the way he spoke and looked, I think Miss Pewsey marries him, and not Forge, Miss Pewsey."

Mrs. Ainsleigh looked up quickly. "Has she got any hold over him?"

"I don't understand, dear."

"The same as she had over my aunt. Rupert, that little woman looks frail, but she is strong, and has a will like iron. In spite of her looks, Aunt Sophia was wax in Miss Pewsey's hands. She exercised a kind of hypnotic power over Aunt Sophia, and that was how the will came to be made in her favor."

"In that case, why not try and upset the will?"

"On a pretext of undue influence. It could be done certainly, but I have no facts to go upon. But it seems to me, from what you say, that Miss Pewsey has hypnotized Forge."

"He's not the kind of man to be hypnotized."

"Yes, he is. He smokes opium. A man who would give way to that vice is not a strong man. But let her be and let him be also, Rupert. I don't believe about this money in China. It is no use our building on that. If the place has to be sold at the end of the year, we will take what we have left and go to Canada. So long as I have

my boy I don't much care," and she wreathed her arms round his neck.

"Dear Olivia, I wish I wasn't the hard-up wretch I am."

"I would not have you any other than you are. If money comes to us it will come honestly, not through the hands of Dr. Forge or his future wife. Neither one is honest."

Rupert would have argued this point, as he thought his wife was a trifle hard. But Olivia stuck to her guns, and gradually all reference to Forge and his story was dropped by tacit consent. The young couple had quite enough to do in talking of their future, which was doubtful, to say the least of it. However, Rupert had arranged with the lawyers to hold over all claims for another year. It only remained to get Miss Pewsey, who now held the fatal mortgage, to extend the time. But Olivia would not allow her husband to ask a favor of the bitter little woman, as she was sure—and rightly so—that it would not be granted. The mortgage held by Miss Pewsey was for three thousand pounds, and the two set their wits to work, to see if they could pay this off by Christmas. Then they would have a good few months left to arrange other matters. If possible, Olivia wished to keep Royabay, though the outlook was not cheering.

Another month slipped by, but few changes took place in Marport. As it was now rather wintry, so many people did not come down to the seaside. Rupert and Olivia lived rather a lonely life at the Abbey, but being very much in love, this did not disturb them; in fact it was rather a pleasure. Sometimes Chris Walker and his aunt called. Lady Jabe had got over her disappointment, now that Olivia was poor, and constantly abused Miss Pewsey

for taking the money. She was making the unfortunate Chris pay attentions to Lotty Dean, whose father was a grocer and had ample wealth. Things were going on nicely in this quarter, and Lady Jabe was pleased.

Clarence Burgh had left Marport and was now amusing himself in London. Sometimes he came down to see his aunt, who was getting ready for her bridal and still lived in Ivy Lodge. There, Forge intended to remove when married, as the house was rent free, and already he had given notice to Tidman, as the Major told Rupert one evening. "And I'm glad he's going," said the Major, as he sat with his usual bottle of port before the fire after dinner. "I couldn't stand seeing that Pewsey cat in my house as Mrs. Doctor Forge."

"I wonder why he marries her?" said Rupert, who was smoking on the other side of the fireplace.

"Because he is frightened of her, sir. That woman for some reason makes every one frightened of her—except me," added the Major swelling; "why, even that young Burgh hardly comes to see her, though he's down here now—waiting for the wedding I suppose. It comes off next week and a nice fright that Pewsey cat will look as a bride."

Rupert laughed. Olivia had left the room and retired to bed. The Major, who had been fidgeting all the evening, looked round when alone with his host. "I want to talk to you," he said.

"What about? Haven't you been talking all the evening?"

"Not on the subject nearest to my heart," said Tidman, sipping his port. "I waited till Mrs. Ainsleigh went away, as I don't want to revive unpleasant memories."

"Oh," said Rupert with a shudder, "surely you are not going to talk of the murder?"

"No—certainly not: but I am of the thing that caused it."

Rupert sat up quickly. "The fan. Why that's in China. Tung-Yu took it, after he—"

"Tung-Yu did *not* take it," said the Major, producing a letter. "I thought he did, if you remember, for you and I saw him on the beach on that night."

"Yes. He was talking to a boatman."

"Arranging for his flight," said Tidman grimly, "and then he went back as I thought and murdered that woman. But he didn't," the Major paused to give full dramatic effect. "He thinks I did it."

"Oh, rubbish!" said Rupert. "If you can prove an alibi on my behalf, I can prove one on yours. We walked and talked on the beach till nearly twelve. Then you went back to your bed, and I returned to the ball-room. Immediately afterward the body was found. What makes Tung-Yu accuse you, and why do you get a letter from China?"

"It's not from China, but from London."

"Is Tung-Yu there?" asked Ainsleigh quickly.

"Yes. In some place in Rotherhithe. He writes from there, in this letter. Read it," and he passed it to his host.

Rupert glanced over the few lines, which were very neatly written on yellow paper. The letter was to the effect that if Major Tidman would bring the fan to a certain place in Rotherhithe, he would receive the money. "Humph!" said Ainsleigh, handing it back; "so it seems that Tung-Yu has not got the fan."

"Yes, confound him! and he thinks *I* have it, in which case he must believe that I murdered Miss Wharf."

Rupert nodded. "It looks like it," said he; "what will you do?"

"I don't know. I do not want another Canton adventure. I thought," here the Major hesitated, "I thought you might go."

Ainsleigh did not burst out into a voluble refusal, as Tidman expected, but stared at the fire. Seeing this, Tidman urged his point. "I think if you went, you might get at the truth of the matter," he said. "If Tung-Yu didn't murder Miss Wharf, who did? Will you go?"

Rupert still gazed at the fire. He was thinking of the eight thousand pounds due to him, held by Lo-Keong, and which, if gained, would pay off Miss Pewsey. "Yes," said he at length, "I'll go."

It was a risk, as he knew, but the money was worth the risk.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROTHERHITHE DEN.

As a rule Rupert told his wife everything, thinking there could be no happiness unless a married couple were frank with one another. Also, he frequently went to Olivia for advice, believing in the keen feminine instinct which usually sees what is hidden from the denser masculine understanding. But on this occasion he refrained from revealing the object of his visit to London, as he knew she would be feverishly anxious all the time he was absent. It just was possible that Hwei might be at Rotherhithe instead of Tung-Yu, and then Rupert might meet with a death similar to that of Miss Wharf. Certainly he had not the fan, and never did possess it; but how was he to convince a distrustful Asiatic of that?

Therefore, Rupert went to town one afternoon by the nine o'clock evening train from Marport, and Olivia thought he was merely going to see his lawyer on business connected with Miss Pewsey's mortgage. Her husband was to return the next day in time for luncheon, and, as he had often run up to town before, Olivia had no misgivings. Had she been aware of the danger he was going into, she assuredly would not have let him go. Mrs. Ainsleigh had led an unhappy life, and now that things were brighter, she certainly did not wish to see her days clouded by the loss of the husband whom she loved so dearly.

As what money there was went to keep up Royabay, its master was too poor to travel first class. But he was

lucky enough to find a third-class smoking carriage empty, and sat down very content. Owing to the nature of his errand, he wished to be alone, to think out his mode of procedure. Tung-Yu would not be an easy person to deal with, still less would Hwei, should he happen to be on the spot, and Ainsleigh had little knowledge of the Chinese character. From what Forge said, he judged it to be dangerous.

There were few people travelling by the train, and Rupert quite believed that he would have the compartment to himself. But just as the train was moving off a man dashed into the carriage and dropped breathlessly on the seat. "I guess that was a narrow squeak," he gasped.

"Mr. Burgh," said Rupert, by no means pleased.

"Well, I am surprised," said the buccaneer, "if it ain't Ainsleigh."

"Mr. Ainsleigh," was Rupert's reply, for he disliked the man too much to tolerate this familiarity.

"Oh, shucks!" retorted Burgh, wiping his forehead, "'tisn't any use putting on frills with me, sir. I guess I'm as good a man as you, any day."

"Let us admit you are better," said Rupert coldly, "and cease conversation."

But this Mr. Burgh was not inclined to do. "I reckon this old tram won't stop at any station for half an hour," said he pulling out a long black cigar, "so I don't see why we should sit like dummies for thirty minutes. Come along, let's yarn. You think I'm a wrong un'. Well, I guess I'm no holy Bill if that's what you mean. But I surmise that I'm friendly enough with you, Ainsleigh."

"Our last interview was not of a friendly character."

"You bet. You laid me out proper, and gave it to me pretty free. I respect a man who knocks me down. I thought you'd curl up when faced, Ainsleigh, but I see you're a fighter. That being so, why I climb down. Not that I'm a coward—oh, no—not by a long chalk: but I know how to size up things."

"And how do you size them up in this case?"

"Well," said Clarence, lighting up, "I guess you've got the bulge on me. I was sweet on your wife, but you aimed a bull's-eye, and I got left. That being so, I concluded to leave other men's goods alone."

"Meaning Mrs. Ainsleigh," said Rupert dryly, "thank you."

"Oh, no thanks. I've got enough sins already; without putting a gilded roof on my iniquities. See here," Clarence leaned forward and looked agreeable, though his wicked black eyes snapped fire, "why shouldn't you and I be friends?"

Rupert did not reply at once. He did not like Burgh, who was an aggressive bully of the Far West. All the same, something might be learned from Burgh relative to the murder, and to the Chinaman. He knew Hwei and knew something of the fan, so Rupert resolved to be on reasonably friendly terms with the buccaneer in the hope of learning something likely to be of use. If Mr. Burgh had a lantern, there was no reason why Ainsleigh should not use the light to illuminate his somewhat dark path. Therefore, when Rupert did speak, it was to express a wish to be friendly. Yet, strange to say, as soon as he showed a disposition to come forward, Clarence, the wary, showed an equal disposition to retire. "Ho!" said the buccaneer,

"I guess you want my help, or you wouldn't be so friendly all at once."

"I am friendly by your own desire," said Ainsleigh dryly; "if you like we need not talk, but can part as enemies."

"No," said Burgh, throwing himself indolently back on the cushions; "fact is, I need you and you need me."

"How do I need you?" asked Rupert sharply.

"Well," drawled Clarence, eying the clear-cut face of his late enemy, "it's just this way. Aunt Lavinia's an old cat. She was all square with me, so long as she thought I'd hitch up 'longside Miss Rayner—"

"Mrs. Ainsleigh if you please, and leave out her name."

"Right, oh. I'll use it only once. Aunty thought I'd annex the cash and Mrs. Ainsleigh, and that she would live on the pair of us. But as things are, aunty has the cash and you've got the lady, so I am left—yes, sir. I guess I've been bested by aunty. Well, sir, I calculate I'm not a millionaire, and I want cash to start out on the long trail. Aunty won't part, shabby old puss that she is; but I reckon if you'll help me, I'll rake in the dollars slick."

"Why should I help you?"

"To get square about that murder."

Rupert drew back. "Do you know?—"

"Oh, I know nothing for certain, or I shouldn't take you into partnership, but I believe I can spot the person."

"Surely you don't think Miss Pewsey—"

"Oh, no. She wouldn't harm any one, unless she was on the right side. She's a cat, but is clever enough to keep herself from being lynched. 'Sides, she was comfortable enough with old Wharf, and wouldn't have sent

her to camp out in the New Jerusalem, by strangling. But aunty's going to hitch up 'longside old Forge—"

"And he?" asked Rupert, secretly excited, but looking calm enough.

"Go slow. I don't know anything for certain, but I guess Forge had a finger in the pie. He wanted the fan, you know."

"Nonsense! He had the fan for two years and made no use of it."

"I reckon not. He didn't know its secret—and the secret's worth money, I judge."

"Do you know the secret?"

"No. If I'd known I shouldn't have passed the article along to old Wharf. But I'm hunting for the secret, and when I find it out, I'll shake old Forge's life out for that fan."

"But Tung-Yu has the fan?"

"Ho!" snorted the buccaneer, "and Tung-Yu's gone to China with Hwei and the fan. Shucks! They gassed that at the inquest, but the poppy-cock don't go down along o' me. No, sir. I guess old Forge has the article. Now you sail in with me, and find out."

"How can I?"

"Well," said the buccaneer reflectively, "your father was a friend of the doctor's and he's chums with you. Just you get him to be confidential like, and then—"

"Forge is the last man to be confidential with any one," said Rupert coldly, "and if this be your scheme I can't help you. There is not a shred of evidence to prove that Forge killed Miss Wharf."

"No. That's a frozen fact; but I guess I'm going to straighten out Forge to pay out aunty. Then both will

have to part with cash for my going on the long trail. I'm in the dark now, but later—"

An end was put to Mr. Burgh's chatter by the stoppage of the train at a station, and by the entrance of a joyful party of father, mother, and three children. These last, returning from a happy day in the country, made themselves agreeable by crying. Clarence closed his mouth, and only bent forward to say one last word to Rupert. "I reckon we'll talk of this to-morrow when I get back to Marport," said he. "I'm putting up at the Bristol, and aunty's footing the bill."

Ainsleigh nodded and buried himself in his own thoughts. He did not see how Clarence could bring the crime home to Dr. Forge, but the buccaneer evidently had his suspicions. Rupert resolved to keep in with Burgh on the chance that something might come of the matter. He saw well enough that Clarence, in desperate want of money, would do all in his power to prove Forge guilty and would then blackmail him and Miss Pewsey, or, as she would then be, Mrs. Forge. This last design, which Rupert suspected Burgh entertained, he resolved should not be put into practice; but if Forge was guilty, he would be arrested and tried. Therefore when Clarence parted with Ainsleigh at the Liverpool Street station the latter was moderately friendly.

"Night," said the buccaneer, wringing Ainsleigh's hand. "See you to-morrow at Marport. Keep it dark," and he winked and disappeared.

Ainsleigh moved toward the barrier to give up his ticket. As he did so he was roughly jostled, but could not see the person who thus banged against him. He left the station, however, with the feeling that he was being followed, and

kept looking back to see if, among the crowd, there was any special person at his heels. But he could see no one with his eyes on him. Yet the feeling continued even when he got into the underground train, which was to take him to Rotherhithe.

The young man had put on a shabby suit of blue serge for the adventure, and—as the night was rainy—wore a heavy overcoat, the same, in fact, which he had left in the cloak-room of the Bristol hotel on that memorable occasion. The compartment was filled with a rather rough set of workmen going home, and some were the worse for liquor. However, Rupert sitting quietly in his own corner was not disturbed, and arrived in Rotherhithe without trouble. He was thankful for this, as he did not wish to have a row when engaged on a secret errand.

It was dark and stormy when he stepped out into the street, but as the address given in the letter written to Major Tidman was that of a narrow street close at hand—Rupert had looked it up in the Directory—he did not take a cab. On his way along the streaming pavement he again had the sensation of being followed, and felt for the revolver, with which he had very wisely provided himself. But nothing happened, and he arrived at the mouth of the narrow street, which was called Penters Alley. There were few people about, as the ragged loafers were within, not caring to face the pelting rain in their light attire. Rupert stepped cautiously down the side street, and saw in the distance a Chinese lantern, which he knew marked the house he was to enter. This token had been set forth in the letter.

Just as the young man was half way down, a dark figure, which had crept up behind him, darted forward and

aimed a blow at him. Rupert dodged and tried to close; but at that moment another figure dashed between the two men and delivered a right-hander. There was a stifled cry of rage and the clash of a knife on the wet pavement. Then the first assailant cleared off, and Rupert found himself facing his rescuer. "Just in time," said Clarence Burgh.

"What, you here!" said Rupert surprised. "I left you at the station."

"I guess that's so, but I followed you—"

"And by what right—"

"That's square enough," replied Burgh; "you'd agreed to work along with me on this racket."

"Not altogether. I had not made up my mind."

"Well, I guess you'll make it up now, Mr. Ainsleigh. It was a good job I came after you as I did, or this would have been into your ribs," and he held up a long knife which he had picked up.

"I am much obliged," said Ainsleigh, "but—"

"Well, if you're obliged, let me go along with you and see you through this game. I don't know what it is, but I'm on for larks."

Ainsleigh reflected, and on the impulse of the moment trusted the man. Clarence had undoubtedly saved his life, and it would be just as well to take him. Also Clarence could do no harm, as Tung-Yu and Hwei would see to that. "Very good," said Ainsleigh, "come along. I'm going to where that Chinese lantern is."

Clarence gave a long whistle and smote his leg. "Gad!" said he between his teeth, "you're on the Chinese racket again."

"On behalf of Major Tidman," and Rupert rapidly gave details.

Burgh whistled again. "Ho!" he laughed, "so they think Tidman's the strangler. Well, I guess not. Forge for my money. Let's heave ahead, Ainsleigh, and see what the Chinkeys have to say."

The two moved on and stopped under the lantern. A sharp knock at a closed door brought forth a Chinese boy, who was dressed—queerly enough—all in red. Rupert recalled Tidman's adventure at Canton, and did not like the look of things. But Clarence pushed past him and addressed the boy.

"We've come to see Tung-Yu," said he; "give this brat the letter, Ainsleigh."

The boy took the letter and instead of looking at it by the light of the lantern, smelt it carefully. Then Ainsleigh remembered that it was strongly perfumed with some queer scent. Clarence cackled.

"Rummy coves, these Chinese beasts," said he politely.

Evidently the boy was satisfied, for he threw open the door, and the two adventurers entered. They passed along a narrow corridor to a second door. On this being opened, they turned down a long passage to the right and were conducted by the red boy into a small room decorated in Chinese fashion, somewhat after the style of that in Dr. Forge's house. At the end there was a shrine with a hideous god set up therein, and before this smoked some joss-sticks giving out a strange perfume. A tasselled lantern hung from the ceiling. The chairs and table, elegant in design, were of carved black wood, and the walls were hung with gayly pictured paper. The room was neat and clean, but pervaded by that strange atmosphere of the East which brings back curious memories to those who have travelled into those parts. After conducting them

into this room the red boy vanished, and the men found themselves alone.

"Well, I reckon we've got to make ourselves comfortable," said the buccaneer, sitting; "rum shanty—just like an opium den I know of, down 'Frisco way. Ho! I wonder how Tung-Yu's escaped the police?"

"I wonder rather who it was that tried to knife me," said Rupert, sitting.

Clarence looked queer. "We'll talk of that when we get through with this business. Here's some fairy."

Even while he spoke a tall lean Chinaman entered noiselessly. He had a rather fierce face and one eye. Burgh started up.

"Hwei," said he amazed. "I thought you had lighted out for 'Frisco."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FAN MYSTERY.

THE one-eyed Chinaman did not smile, nor did he greet Burgh in any way, friendly or otherwise. He simply looked at the two with an impassive gaze, and then glanced at a clock, the hands of which pointed to thirty minutes past eleven. What a clock should be doing in this Eastern room, the visitors could not make out. It seemed to be out of place. Yet there it was, and there was Hwei staring at it. He still preserved silence and brought his one eye from the clock to Rupert with a malevolent glare.

"Major Tidman has not come," said Hwei in English, as good as that spoken by Tung-Yu, but in a grating voice.

"No," said Rupert who was addressed. "He received your note—or rather Tung-Yu's letter—and asked me to come here on his behalf."

"And I guess, Hwei," drawled Clarence, "that I have come to see the business through."

"That will not take long," said the Chinaman cheerfully, yet with an unpleasant stare. "Where is the fan of the mandarin?"

"I have not got it," replied Ainsleigh shortly.

"Major Tidman did not send it perhaps."

"No. For the simple reason that it is not in his possession."

"That," said Hwei grimly, "is a lie."

"It's the truth," chipped in Burgh suddenly; "old man Tidman didn't choke that woman!"

"You mean Miss Wharf?"

Burgh nodded. "That's so," said he in a curt way, but with a watchful eye on the one-eyed Chinaman.

Hwei gnawed his long finger nails, and then slipped his hands inside his long hanging sleeves. In his dull blue clothes with the clumsy slippers he looked taller than ever, and quite as unpleasant as at first sight. His pigtail was coiled round his shaven head. He looked sharply at the two men with his one eye, and appeared to be thinking. "It's my day," said he at length.

Ainsleigh and Burgh jumped up. "Do you intend to murder us?" asked Rupert.

"If you have the fan," rejoined Hwei coldly; "it is the order of the god Kwang-Ho," and he bowed reverentially to the ugly image.

"What right's that second-hand joss to give orders in a free country, Hwei?" asked Clarence; "and don't you think we'll give in without laying you out."

Hwei made a clicking noise with his tongue and then smote a small brass gong which hung near the door. The thunder had scarcely died away before the door opened and there appeared four or five villanous-looking Chinamen with long knives. Rupert stepped back and stood against the wall, with his revolver levelled. But Clarence simply produced the knife he had picked up on the pavement. "I guess," he said reflectively, "you tried to knife Ainsleigh outside. The knife here's the same as those things yonder," and he nodded toward the door. "Well, sail in. We're ready for the play."

Hwei started at this speech, and chattered something
hi once the door closed and the three were
ever ordered any one to be knifed out-

side," he said, with his one eye on Clarence; "that would be foolish. First the fan, then the death."

"I was certainly attacked outside," said Rupert, lowering his revolver.

"Who attacked you, sir?"

"I can't say. But perhaps Burgh—"

"That's my business," said the cheerful Clarence, who had taken his seat, and did not seem to be at all afraid of the dangerous position in which he found himself; "what we have to do is to yarn about this fan. I saw you in 'Frisco, Hwei. I reckoned the fan was there."

"We thought so, Mr. Burgh, but it came to the ears of Lo-Keong that it was in England. So then I came here."

"Ah, I saw you in China also," said Clarence.

"You did, and learned much about the fan—too much," growled Hwei.

Rupert, who was growing weary of all this hinted mystery, sat down again, and threw the revolver on the table. "I wish you would make a clean breast of this," he said calmly. "I don't care about the fan, but I do want to know who killed Miss Wharf."

"Major Tidman did."

"No. He was with me on the beach. I went out to smoke and we strolled up and down till nearly twelve. He was with me shortly after eleven, so he could not have killed the woman."

Hwei pointed a long finger at the young man. "I saw Major Tidman speaking to a boatman on the beach—the boat came from the Stormy Petrel—"

"Your boat," said Burgh quickly.

"No. The boat of Tung-Yu. It was my day, but

Tung-Yu hoped to get the fan after twelve at night and then would have had the right to take it away in the boat. Major Tidman killed Miss Wharf and gave the knowledge of his crime to Tung-Yu. He would not part with the fan till the money was paid. Tung-Yu went away in the boat so that the police might not get him. He was wise," added Hwei with a queer smile, "as he is accused of the murder."

"Which you committed."

"No, I did not. Had I found Miss Wharf outside I should have killed her. It was my hour, but she escaped me."

"Then you were in Marport on that night?" asked Rupert.

Hwei nodded. "Not at the hotel. Tung-Yu went to the ball, and was to bring Miss Wharf out down the steps, so that I could kill her. I came to the steps about twelve, and while waiting on the beach I saw you, sir, talking to the Major. But Tung-Yu betrayed me." Hwei's face looked fiercer than ever." "He did not bring her to me in my hour, and so betrayed the trust of the god Kwang-Ho. He wanted her to live, so that he might buy the fan next day."

"But so long as he got the fan—"

Hwei flung out a long arm. "No," said he austerely; "if Tung-Yu gets the fan it goes with its secret into the hands of Mandarin Hop-Sing, who is the enemy of my master."

"And who is your master?" asked Clarence.

"Lo-Keong. Listen." Hwei took a seat and talked, with his one eye on the visitors. "The fan is my master's, and holds a secret which means much to him.

It is lost. We invoked the god Kwang-Ho. By the mouth of his priest the god said that two men should search for it. I was to search for Lo-Keong, and Tung-Yu for Hop-Sing, the enemy of my master. Hop-Sing's emissary was to buy the fan at a large price, I was to kill the person who held it. Thus, said the god, justice would be done. The person who held the fan would be rewarded for virtue or slain for evil. One day is mine and the next day is Tung-Yu's. At the ball I had my hour, and had I found Miss Wharf I would have slain her for the fan. But Tung-Yu betrayed me, as he wished to buy the fan next day. But the god Kwang-Ho interfered, and the woman who held the fan wrongfully met with her doom. Great is the justice of the god Kwang-Ho," and he bowed again to the ugly image, which was half veiled by the curling smoke.

Rupert stared at the man who talked such good English, yet who used it to utter such extraordinary things. He was not acquainted with the Chinese character, and could not understand the affair. But on reflection he concluded that the alternate killing and rewarding was adopted as giving a chance of treating the person who secured the fan in the way he or she deserved. "I see what you mean," said he; "if the person got the fan wrongfully, it would come into your possession in your way; if rightfully, it would go to Tung-Yu; therefore the holder of the fan would be rewarded according to his or her deeds."

Hwei bowed. "Great is the wisdom of the god Kwang-Ho," said he.

"Then I guess you're wrong and the god also," said Clarence; "old Miss Wharf got the fan squarely enough from me."

"She had it wrongfully," said Hwei obstinately, "else she would not have been slain."

"Who slew her?" asked Rupert, seeing the uselessness of argument.

"Major Tidman."

"No. I tell you he was on the beach. Tung-Yu killed her."

Hwei shook his head. "Tung-Yu dare not," said he; "the god would slay him if he disobeyed."

"The god didn't slay him when he played low down on you in keeping Miss Wharf back from your knife," said Clarence.

"Tung-Yu has done penance. He has made amends. He wrote to Major Tidman telling him to come here on my night, so that he might meet with his doom."

"But he hasn't come."

"He is afraid."

"No," said Rupert decisively, "the Major has not the fan. Who has, I know no more than I do who killed Miss Wharf."

Hwei wavered, and his keen face grew troubled. The persistence of Rupert was having its effect. "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," said Ainsleigh promptly.

"Will you swear this before the god Kwang-Ho?"

"Certainly—but remember I am a Christian."

Hwei went to the shrine and brought forth a joss-stick. "The god Kwang-Ho is all powerful," said he solemnly; "if you lie he will not spare you. Burn this joss before him and swear."

"No," said Rupert drawing back. "I am a Christian."

Hwei's eye flashed with fury. "You are lying," said he; "you will never leave this place alive."

"Oh, I guess so," said Clarence easily; "neither I nor Ainsleigh has the fan, and you can't kill either of us unless the god grows angry. You've got to climb down before him."

"That is true," said Hwei, dropping the joss-stick, and sat in his chair with a puzzled face. He then pointed to the clock, the long hand of which was drawing to twelve. "When that strikes, my hour is over," he said, "but I may kill you before then."

"You've got ten minutes to do it in," said Burgh cheerfully, "and Ainsleigh and I intend to fight for it. You'll be hanged too."

"No," said Hwei. "I'll be on my way to China with the fan. I have a boat waiting near, to take me to a special steamer. I intended to kill Major Tidman, take the fan and go. Then all the police in the country would not have caught me."

"And your nice little plan has been defeated by the Major not coming up," said Rupert calmly; "just as well he didn't. And I have not got the fan."

"Who has—who has?" said Hwei biting his nails, and evidently quite at a loss. "I made sure—" he looked at Clarence.

"Oh, it wasn't me," said that gentleman promptly, "but I may know who killed the old woman and has the fan."

Hwei flung himself forward. "Tell—tell—tell," he gasped, and he laid his long fingers on Burgh's throat. The young man threw him over with a great effort and slipped back to the wall, where he stood beside Rupert.

The two had out their revolvers. "You wait," said Clarence in a breathless voice, for the struggle though brief had been violent; "tell me the secret of the fan, and I'll give you the name of the person who has it."

"What!" cried Hwei furiously, "betray my master, you foreign devil! I will kill you first."

"You've just got five minutes to do it in," cried Burgh jeeringly.

The Chinaman put his fingers to his lips and blew a shrill whistle. In a moment the room was filled with Chinamen, chattering and screaming like so many infuriated parrots. Hwei threw himself on the young men. "Die—die!" he said thickly.

"Fire—fire!" cried Clarence, kicking Hwei back.

For the next few minutes Rupert had no very clear idea of what was happening. He fired into the mass of Chinamen pushing forward, and heard a cry as a man dropped. The others fell over him, and in the struggle upset the shrine. The ugly joss rolled on to the floor and caught fire. There were shrill screams from the Chinese, who began to jab with their knives. Clarence was rolling on the floor in close grips with Hwei, and the draperies of the joss flared away in a brilliant manner. It seemed as though the two rash men would be either burnt or stabbed, and the end was coming rapidly.

All at once the silvery chime of the clock sounded and then came the rapid striking of the hour. The door opened and the boy in red appeared. He said something in a screaming voice, and then, almost as by magic, the room emptied. The rolling mass of Chinamen had extinguished the flaming joss, and Hwei, suddenly disengaging himself from the buccaneer, darted through the door.

The boy followed with the rest of the assailants, and when Rupert and Burgh got their breath they found themselves facing the still smoking joss, with Tung-Yu blandly smiling at them.

"Ho!" said Clarence, rising and shaking himself, "I guess the row's over. Hurt, Ainsleigh?"

"Got a flesh wound," said Rupert, winding his handkerchief round his left arm, "and you?"

"I'm as right as a pie. So here's Tung-Yu. Your hour I guess."

The Chinaman bowed, and picking up the god restored him to his shrine, which was considerably damaged. "It is lucky the red boy cried that Hwei's hour was over," he said coolly, "or you would both have been killed."

"You wouldn't have got the fan though," said Rupert, throwing himself down on his seat; "but you don't intend to kill us, I suppose."

"No. The god Kwang-Ho is merciful now. I make you rich."

"Humph!" said Burgh crossly, "I wish I had that fan with me."

"You have, or Mr. Ainsleigh here has it," said Tung-Yu. "I will give you five thousand for the fan."

"I haven't got it."

"Think—ten thousand."

"Great Scott!" cried Clarence avariciously, "wish I could trade."

"Fifteen thousand," said Tung-Yu, his eyes glittering. "Come, gentlemen, it's better to be rich than dead. For the next twenty-four hours I can give you money. Then comes Hwei's hour and he will kill you."

"Not much," said Burgh; "I'm going to cut."

"You shall be kept here till you give up the fan."

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. "You won't believe," he said; "why not search us? Then you can see we have not the fan. Do you believe that Major Tidman has it?"

"Yes. He gave it to you. He killed—'

"He did not. Can you swear that he did?"

"No. But I thought—"

"Oh, shucks!" said Clarence, shoving himself forward; "see here, Mr. Tung-Yu. I'm sick of this business. We haven't got that durned fan. But I can tell you who has."

"Tell then and I give you a thousand pounds."

"Not good enough," said Burgh coolly; "see here, you let us go free and tell us the fan's secret, and I'll tell you."

"Yes, and get the fan, and learn the secret," cried Tung-Yu excited, "but you cannot make use of the secret."

"Don't want to. And as to the fan, you can get it from the person I tell you of. Then you can fork out fifteen thousand."

The Chinaman deliberated. "We have been wrong about Major Tidman, I think," said he politely. "It seems some one else has it. I suppose—"

"I didn't kill the old girl myself, if that's what you mean."

"Quite so," said Tung-Yu, after another pause. "Well, as you can't make any use of the secret I'll tell you of it. Then you can go free, after you have told me who killed Miss Wharf."

"Right, oh!" said Clarence, and Rupert listened breathlessly.

"The fan," said Tung-Yu, "is jade on one side, and enamel on the other. The enamelled side is painted with

a picture invisible. To bring out the picture, this fan has to be waved in certain smoke—"

"What sort of smoke?"

"I won't tell you that," said Tung-Yu politely, "I have told enough."

"Well, then," said Rupert, "when the picture is visible what happens?"

"It will show a hiding place which contains certain things we want to get, in order to ruin Lo-Keong with the Empress."

"Oh, I see, a plan of a secret hiding place."

"Now you know," said Tung-Yu to Clarence; "tell me—"

"Not till I know of the smoke."

"I refuse. But I give you fifteen thousand to get that fan. One thousand now if you tell me who killed the woman and who has it."

"Good," said Clarence, "I'll trade. Dr. Forge strangled Miss Wharf."

"Ah!" said Tung-Yu, leaping up, "he has the fan. Thanks, Kwang-Ho," and he bowed to the half-destroyed image.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DISAPPEARANCE.

WHEN Rupert returned to Marport next day, Burgh accompanied him. The young squire of Royabay wished to give information to the police regarding the guilt of Forge. But Clarence persuaded him against doing so.

"You'll only get me into a row," said he, in his candid way. "You see I told a lie."

"You tell so many lies," said Rupert sharply; "I don't know but what I ought to give you in charge."

"I guess not, seeing I saved your life last night."

"No. You're right there, Burgh. But have you really anything to do with this murder?"

"No, 'cept as how I told old Tung-Yu last night."

"Just repeat what you said. I was so faint with the loss of blood that I didn't gather half you said."

Burgh nodded. "You were pretty sick. I'd to help you back to civilization, same as if you were drunk. If I hadn't, you'd have been robbed and killed down that Bowery gangway."

Ainsleigh could not but acknowledge that Clarence had acted very well. He had saved him from the man who attacked him in the street, and also it was owing to him that the two had escaped from the gang of Hwei. Finally Burgh had taken Rupert back to the Guelph Hotel in Jermyn Street, when he was rather shaky from the wound. It was much better this morning, but Ainsleigh looked pale, and not at all himself. Still he did not grudge

the trifling wound—it was merely a scratch, although it had bled freely—as the knowledge he had acquired was well worth the trouble. They had left the den in Penters Alley some time after midnight, and had returned safely to the West, where Rupert had acted as host to Burgh. That was Clarence all over. Whenever he did any one a service, he always took it out of him in some way, and but for the dangerous position in which he found himself, would have quartered his carcass on Rupert for an indefinite period.

"But there ain't no denying that I'm in a fix," said Burgh, as the train drew near Marport. "That is, if you split, Ainsleigh."

"No, I won't split on you. But if Forge is guilty, he must be arrested," said Rupert decisively.

"But I don't know if he strangled the old girl after all."

"You said he did, last night."

"Well, I wanted to know the secret of that fan."

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. "You know that the fan when waved in a certain smoke—of which by the way you learned nothing—reveals a hiding place which contains certain things Tung-Yu wants—"

"To ruin Lo-Keong," said Burgh quickly. "So I guess if I can pick up that fan from old Forge, I'll yank in the dollars."

"Aren't you satisfied with what you have?"

"This thousand! Oh, that's all right. I cashed the check before I joined you at the station—got it in gold, so I can clear out when it suits me. It's always as well to be ready to git."

"I suppose," said Ainsleigh dryly, "in your varied career, you have had frequent occasions to 'git,' as you call it."

"You bet. But git's slang American and good Turkish lingo, so you've no need to sneer, old man. Say, about Forge. What's to be done?"

"I'll communicate with Rodgers and tell him what you say. If the doctor is guilty, he must suffer."

"My eye!" said Clarence reflectively, "won't aunty be mad? Well, I guess this will square us: she won't play low down on me again."

"Burgh, you're a blackguard."

"I am, that's a fact," said the buccaneer, in no wise disturbed. "But don't you say that in public or the fur'll fly."

"Pooh! You know I'm equal to you. But this story—"

"The one I told Tung-Yu last night," grinned Burgh. "I'll reel it out now, and you can sort it out as you choose. I believe Forge to be the scragger of the old girl, because he had that tie of yours."

"How did he get the tie?"

"I gave it to him," confessed Clarence candidly.

"Yes—I remember you said so last night. But I forget how you explained the getting of it."

"Huh!" drawled Burgh, folding his arms. "You might call it stealing, old pard. Y'see Miss Pewsey—my old aunty that is—saw Olivia—"

"Mrs. Ainsleigh, hang you!"

"Right, oh!" continued Burgh imperturbably. "Well, aunty saw Mrs. Ainsleigh pass the tie to you, and when you went to the cloak-room she told me. I was real mad, not knowing how things were, as I wanted that tie for myself. I'd no notion of your getting things made by the young lady I was sweet on—"

"I wish you would leave out my wife's name," said

Rupert angrily, and wincing with pain, for his wound hurt him not a little.

"I'll try: don't get your hair off. Well, I cut along to the card-room—no, 'twasn't the card-room—the cloak-room, and saw you standing by your coat, just hanging it up again."

"And you saw me put the tie in the pocket."

"I guess not; but I fancied you might have done so. Then I waited outside while you yarned with the Chinese cove and Tidman. After that I cut in and you know the rest."

"Up to the time I knocked you down. Well?"

"Smashing blow," said Burgh coolly; "you can use your hands pretty well, I reckon—but a six-shooter's more in my line. Well, when you cut, I lay down and saw stars for a time. Then I thought I'd pay you out by annexing the tie."

"You didn't know it was there?"

"Thought it might be," rejoined Burgh coolly; "anyhow there was no harm in trying. I found the tie, and went out with it, thinking you'd be pretty sick when you found it gone. I went into the card-room where old Forge was cheating, I guess, and had a yarn along o' him. He just roared when I showed him the tie, for he hates you like pie."

"What's that?" asked Rupert sharply; "you are mistaken."

"I guess not. That old man would have been glad to see you scragged, Mr. Ainsleigh. He asked me to let him have the tie—"

"What for?"

Burgh shrugged his shoulders. "He didn't say. But

I let him have it anyhow. I wasn't in a position to refuse. Y'see, Ainsleigh, I'm not a holy Bill and—"

"And Forge knows a few of your escapades likely to land you in—"

"Y'needn't say the word," interrupted Burgh in his turn, "'tisn't a pretty one. But I guess Forge could make things hot for me if he liked, so that was why I lay low when I saw the tie round the old girl's throat. I guessed then Forge had scragged her and boned the fan. I asked him about it, and he lied like billeo. Said he'd lost the tie, and never touched the old 'un. Then he said if I made any fuss, he'd tell the police about—"

"About what?" asked Ainsleigh, seeing the man hesitate.

"Huh!" replied Burgh uncomfortably, "I guess that's my business. I told you I wasn't a saint."

"I suspect you're a thorough-paced jail-bird."

"No, I ain't been in quod. Where I gavorted round, in the Naked Lands, they don't shove a man in chokey for every trifle."

"Such as murder. Eh?"

"I haven't murdered any one yet," confessed Clarence easily, "but one never knows. But I told about Forge last night, as I wanted to get this thousand. Now I'll try for the fan, and see if I can't get the fifteen thousand to come my way. If Forge cuts up rough, I'll light out with what I have"—he slapped his pockets—"for Callao," and he began to sing the old song:—

"On no occasion is extradition
Allowed in Callao.

And I know a daisy of a girl out there," said the scamp, winking.

Ainsleigh was too disgusted to speak. He felt that he was as big a ruffian as Burgh, to tolerate this conversation, and he was relieved when the train steamed into Marport station. As soon as it stopped he jumped out, and nodding to his companion, he was about to take his leave, when Clarence stopped him. "Say. You won't round on Forge till I get this fan business settled."

"I intend to write to Rodgers to-day," said Ainsleigh tartly; "bad as your aunt is, she shan't marry that scoundrel if I can help it."

"But I only know Forge got the scarf as I told you. He mightn't have scragged her, y' know. He says he didn't."

"And relied on what he knows of you to keep things quiet. No, Mr. Burgh, I intend to have the man arrested," and Rupert turned away, while Clarence, apparently not at all disturbed, went away whistling his Callao ditty.

Rupert drove to Royabay and was welcomed with joy by his wife. She was much alarmed when she saw his condition, and was very angry when he told of his danger. She made him lie down, and bathed the wound, of which Rupert made light. "It's nothing, dear," he said.

"It might be dangerous. There might have been poison on that knife, Rupert. You know what the Chinese are."

"No, Olivia, I certainly don't. All this business of the fan and the god Kwang-Ho is most ridiculous."

"Tell me all about it," said Olivia, when she had placed a tray, with tea and toast, before him.

"I shall do so at once, as I want your advice," and Rupert related all that had occurred from the time of his meeting with Clarence Burgh in the train on the previous

night. Olivia listened in silence. "Well," asked Rupert, drinking his tea, "what do you think?"

"I think Mr. Burgh is a scoundrel."

"Any one can see that!"

"And worthy of his aunt."

"Perhaps. She's a bad one, that Miss Pewsey, but she may not know what a rascal she has for a relative. And at all events, I can't let her marry Forge. Do you believe he is guilty?"

"He might be," said Olivia cautiously, "but I would much rather believe that Burgh gave the tie to his aunt, and that she strangled Aunt Sophia."

Rupert laughed. "What a vindictive person you are, dearest," said he. "Miss Pewsey is bad, but not so bad as that."

"I'd credit her with anything," said Olivia, who was truly feminine in her detestation of Miss Pewsey. "She has insulted me for years, and put Aunt Sophia against me, and caused me to lose the money."

"Well—well," said Rupert soothingly, "let us think the best of her—she has her good points."

"Where are they—what are they? She is a—no," Olivia checked herself and looked penitent; "I really must not give way to such unworthy feelings. I'll try and think the best of her, and I agree with you, darling, that she must not marry Dr. Forge."

"Do you think I should write to Rodgers?"

"Certainly. The marriage must be stopped. Write to-day."

But Rupert did not write that day, for the simple reason that the wound on his arm grew very painful, and he became delirious. The doctor who was called in said that

there was poison in the blood and then Olivia was alarmed lest Rupert should lose his arm, and perhaps his life. However, the doctor was young and clever and by careful treatment he drew out the poison, and in a few days the young man's arm had resumed its normal condition, and his brain again became clear. Then he wrote a letter to Rodgers asking him to come down to Royabay on a matter connected with the murder of his wife's aunt. After the letter had been posted, Rupert went out for a walk with his wife, and strolled round the grounds. As the two crossed the lawn admiring the beauty of the day, which was bright and clear and slightly frosty, Mrs. Pettley appeared, coming up the avenue. She made straight for the young couple.

"Please, Master Rupert, that gent's called again."

"What, Mr. Burgh?" said Olivia, and then in answer to her husband's inquiring look she explained. "He has called for the last three days, dear, since you were ill. I never told you, as I thought it might worry you."

"And he just called to ask how you were, Master Rupert," said the old housekeeper, "and never come nearer than the lodge, as old Payne can testify. I told him you were out walking and he asked if he could come in and see you."

"Certainly," said Rupert—then, when Mrs. Pettley hurried away, he turned to Olivia. "Burgh simply wants to find out if I have communicated with Rodgers. He's frightened for his own skin."

Shortly Mrs. Pettley returned with the information that Mr. Burgh was nowhere to be seen. This did not trouble Rupert, who thought that the buccaneer (always of an impatient disposition) might have grown tired of

waiting. With Olivia, he strolled round the grounds for thirty minutes and at length entered the ruins of the Abbey. Here the first thing they saw, was Mr. Clarence Burgh seated on a stone under the copper-beach. He jumped up and came forward, with his usual grace and invariable impudence.

"Glad to see you out again, Ainsleigh," said he taking off his hat, "and you look well, Mrs. Ainsleigh—just like a picture."

"Thank you," replied Olivia, concealing her dislike with difficulty, "you wish to see my husband, I presume."

"Just for two shakes," said Clarence easily; "say, old man, what about Forge? Are y' going to round on him?"

Rupert nodded. "I have written to Rodgers to-day. But I'll give him this chance of escape—warn him if you like."

"Not me," said Burgh coldly, "every man for his own durned skin—begging your pardon, Mrs. Ainsleigh. I saw him while you were trying for Kingdom Come, and told him that he'd the fan."

"What did he say?"

"Gave me the lie. Swore he'd been in the card-room between eleven and twelve, and never saw the old girl. Said he'd had enough of the fan, as it had nearly caused his death. Then he said he'd split on me if I gave him away."

"But you told him, you did confess to the Chinaman."

"Oh, that's all right. Forge don't care a red cent for their telling the police. They won't engineer the biznai into the courts. So long as they get the fan, they don't mind. Forge knows they won't make the matter public, but now he's in mortal fear, lest they should kill him."

"Thinking he's got the fan."

"You bet—on my evidence. Well," said Burgh calmly, and with a twinkle in his evil eyes, "I reckon old man Forge is in an almighty fix. He's in danger of being knifed by Hwei—thanks to me, and of being hanged for killing the old girl—thanks to you."

Olivia's face expressed her disgust. "If you have heard all you wish to hear, we'll go away," she said to her husband.

"Right, oh," said Burgh. "Don't mind me. Pretty place y' have here," he added looking round the beautiful cloisters, "that's the place where they lynched the old monk, I reckon. I've heard that silly rhyme of yours, Ainsleigh. I guess you've fulfilled one part."

"How so?" asked Rupert stiffly.

"About the marriage y' know. A poor Ainsleigh has wedded a poor wife. So that's all right. Now I—"

"I must be going," interrupted Ainsleigh, annoyed by the man's glib talk, "have you anything else to say?"

"Only this. Forge is going to hitch 'longside Aunt Lavinia to-morrow, and if you run him in, she'll get left."

"All the better for her," said Ainsleigh calmly, "he's a bad lot."

"That's so. Much worse than you think. He was the man who tried to stab you in Penters Alley."

"No."

"He was though. I saw his face under the lamp, as he let fly. Then he cut and—you know the rest. But I'm off. My eye!" Clarence chuckled, "what a shine there'll be to-morrow, when aunty gets left."

Burgh strolled away whistling, and Olivia expressed her disgust at his free and easy manners. Rupert, re-

flecting on what Clarence had told him of Forge's assault, resolved to be a fair and open enemy. He decided to call on Forge and tell him that he had written to Rodgers. Also, he desired to ask why he attempted the second crime. Olivia approved, so Rupert went early next day to Tidman's Avenue. The door was opened by Mrs. Bressy who was wiping her mouth as though she had just been at the bottle, which was probably the case. In reply to Rupert's inquiry for her master, she told him that Dr. Forge had gone. "He went to Londing, sir—larst night," said Mrs. Bressy.

"Did he leave any address?"

"No, Mr. Ainsleigh, he did not."

The inference was easy. Forge had bolted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SURPRISE.

RUPERT was much disappointed that Forge had not been arrested. Apart from the fact that he thought the old scoundrel should suffer for his dastardly crime in killing an inoffensive woman, he wished to learn what Forge could reveal of his father's death. The explanation already given did not satisfy him, and he suspected that the doctor knew more than he chose to admit. But under pressure, and standing in danger of his life, he might be induced to be more explicit. But as the man, apparently warned by Clarence, had disappeared, there was no more to be said. And Forge had taken a large trunk, and all his loose cash, so there was no doubt that he intended to keep away from Marport.

Ainsleigh, much disgusted, went to seek Clarence Burgh at the Bristol Hotel, but learned that he also had gone away. Much perplexed the young man sought out Major Tidman, and laid the case before him. The Major was much astonished at the recital, and very angry to learn that Hwei and Tung-Yu suspected him of the murder. "But I guessed they did, from the fact of that letter asking after the fan," said Tidman, pacing his room, much agitated. "I hope, Ainsleigh, they don't think I have it now, or my life will not be worth a moment's purchase."

"No. You needn't worry. Burgh has fully convinced them that Forge has the fan."

"Then they'll make for him."

"No doubt, and perhaps that is why Forge cleared out. But I don't understand why our friend Burgh should make himself scarce."

"I do," said Tidman, sitting down and wiping his bald forehead, "he isn't a man with a clean past, and Forge knows about it. It's just on the cards that, to revenge himself on Burgh for having told Hwei about the fan, Forge has written to the police giving an account of Master Clarence's delinquency."

"But, on the other hand, if Burgh warned Forge that I had written to Rodgers, the doctor might forgive him."

"Not he. Forge is a bitter hater, and after all, Clarence would only be trying to right what he had put wrong. If he'd held his tongue about the fan and the murder, there would be no need for Forge to cut. As it is, I believe the doctor will make it hot for our mutual friend."

"When did you see Burgh last?"

"At dinner last night. He said nothing about going away, and I quite believed he would stop on. He's in good quarters here and Miss Pewsey is paying the bill. But he took a small bag with him, saying he was going up town for a few days, and left by the nine evening train."

"Ah! He may come back after all."

"He may: but I doubt it. He doesn't want to face an inquiry. You see he gave the tie to Forge and said nothing about it at the inquest, so that makes him an accessary after the fact."

"But Burgh didn't know Forge's game."

"No. All the same he should have spoken out at the inquest. Well, and what is to be done now?"

"Nothing. I'm sick of the whole business. But Forge told me that this mandarin Lo-Keong holds eight

thousand pounds belonging to my father. I intend to write for it."

Tidman looked doubtful. "I don't think you'll get it," said he, "unless you produce the fan."

"Oh! I expect Forge has taken that away with him."

"Well then, Tung-Yu and Hwei will be on his track, and I shouldn't give much for his life."

"Wait a bit. He may get the money from Tung-Yu."

"If he chances on Tung-Yu's day. Queer start that," added the Major musingly, "the red boy appeared when I just had my big toe cut off and saved my life. It happened much the same with you, and Hwei lost his power, as he was getting ready to kill you. I wonder these two scoundrels obey the god so slavishly."

"Oh, they are both afraid of the god," said Rupert, rising to take his leave, "but I must get home. There's nothing more to be discussed."

"Nothing," replied the Major chuckling, "unless it is about that old cat's disappointment. I'll go up to St. Peter's Church and see how she takes it."

"Of course," said Ainsleigh, lingering at the door, "it's her wedding day. I expect she knows by this time that Forge has cut."

"I hope not," said the Major cruelly. "I wouldn't lose the fun for something."

Rupert didn't agree with his callous view of the case, as Miss Pewsey was a woman after all, although a bad one; and it would be hard that she should suffer what she would certainly regard as a public disgrace. So Rupert avoided St. Peter's Church, and went home again. Here he found Olivia with a letter.

"This arrived by the early post," she explained, "but

you went out so quickly that I could not give it to you. Just look at it, Rupert, such beautiful writing."

"A foreigner's evidently," said her husband, looking at the really elegant calligraphy. "They take more care than we do of their pot-hooks and hangers, Olivia." He started.

"What's the matter?"

Rupert put the envelope under her nose. "Smell it. Don't you recognize the scent?"

"No," said Mrs. Ainsleigh, "it's a strange scent."

"Very, and was used to perfume the letter which Tung-Yu sent to Major Tidman. This may have to do with the fan again."

Olivia looked nervous. "I wish we could hear the last of it," she said. "It has caused enough trouble already. Open the letter, dear."

Rupert did so and was more astonished than ever.

"Here's an unexpected development," he remarked, passing the letter to Olivia, "Lo-Keong is in England."

Mrs. Ainsleigh read the few lines which stated that the mandarin was stopping at a fashionable hotel in Northumberland Avenue, and would do himself the honor of calling on the son of his old friend in a few days. "He's come to see after the fan personally," said Olivia, returning the letter. "I am glad."

"So am I," said Rupert quickly. "I'll now learn the truth about my father, and see if I can't get that eight thousand pounds."

"Rupert. Do you think Lo-Keong killed your father?"

"I can't say. Forge declared over and over again that he died of dysentery, and that Lo-Keong seized the money for the Boxers. But I'll demand an explanation from the mandarin."

"Will he give it?" asked Mrs. Ainsleigh doubtfully.

"He'll have to," replied Rupert grimly, "and he'll have to give the money back also. I don't care for Forge's cash, as a villain such as he is doesn't deserve any reward. But I want my own eight thousand, and I'll have it."

"I hope so," sighed Olivia, "we could then pay off Miss Pewsey, or rather Mrs. Forge, as she no doubt is by this time."

"No. Forge has bolted."

"What, on the eve of the wedding?"

"Yes. He cleared out last night. Either he fears being arrested for the murder of your aunt, or he dreads lest Hwei should come down to kill him, for the sake of the fan. At all events he has gone, and Miss Pewsey is no doubt waiting at the altar of St. Peter's Church, for a bridegroom who will never come. But we must attend to our own troubles, dear. I'll write to the mandarin to-day and ask him to visit us when it suits him. Or else I can run up—"

"No," interrupted Olivia in a voice of alarm. "I won't have you go away again until this fan business is settled. I'm always afraid of your falling into the hands of these Chinamen. I shall ask Mr. Lo-Keong to stop them searching for the fan."

"He can stop Hwei," said Rupert rising, "but Tung-Yu is in the employment of Hop-Sing, the mandarin's rival. Don't be afraid, my dearest, I have been protected by Providence these many days, and it is not likely that I'll come to grief. But I fear for Forge and for Burgh, who has likewise bolted. Those two will certainly get into trouble."

"It is wrong to say so," said Mrs. Ainsleigh with a

sigh, "but I *do* dislike that man Burgh, and Dr. Forge also."

"Leave them in God's hands, dear," replied her husband gravely; "if they have sinned, they will be punished. What we have to do, is to learn if Lo-Keong will restore this money. I'll write, asking him to come down to Royabay," and Rupert went to the library forthwith.

It was an autumnal day with a promise of rain. Ragged clouds drifted across a cold blue sky, and the wind was rather high. Already many trees had shed their leaves, but the pine boughs still bore their sombre burdens. Everything looked old and miserable, and there seemed to lurk a premonition of evil in the air. At least, Olivia thought so, as she stood at the drawing-room window, looking out on to the terrace and down the avenue, which could be seen from this point of view. Rupert was in the library engaged on his letter to the mandarin, and Olivia was half inclined to join him. She felt weary, chilly and out of spirits, and could not account for doing so.

"I'm the happiest girl in the world," she assured herself. "I have married the man I love, and he adores me. He rescued me from a miserable life, and is making me immensely happy. I should certainly be in the best of spirits yet—"

She stopped short at this point and her eyes became fixed, while a color flushed her somewhat pale cheeks. And no wonder. Up the avenue, battling against the force of the wind, came Miss Pewsey. She wore a bridal dress of white, a lace bonnet trimmed with orange blossoms, and carried a bouquet of flowers. To see this figure in such a dress walking under a sombre sky, between dripping trees, and with the wind blowing furiously

against it, was a strange sight, and gave Olivia what the Scotch call "a grue." Then she became indignant. It was insolent, she thought, that this woman who had insulted her so often, who had made her life miserable, who had robbed her of her inheritance and who had tried to defame her character, should thus present herself. On the impulse of the moment and in spite of wind and of the rain, which was beginning to fall, Mrs. Ainsleigh threw open the French window and stepped out on to the terrace. It was in her mind to order Miss Pewsey away. She deserved little mercy at Olivia's hands.

The noise made by the opening of the window made Miss Pewsey raise her head, and then she came straight across the grass. As she drew near, Olivia was struck with the tragic horror of her face. She was always old in her looks, but now she seemed at least a hundred. Her lips were white, her eyes red and with dark circles under them; a myriad wrinkles ploughed her face, and her usually bright eyes were dim and blood-shot. To see this weird face under the bridal bonnet was at once grotesque and pathetic. Without a word, Miss Pewsey climbed the steps gasping at every step, and came directly toward Olivia. She passed her and entered the room. Mrs. Ainsleigh came after in a whirlwind of passion.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, "this is *my* house."

"I am aware of the fact," said Miss Pewsey dropping into a chair and shaking out her soiled and sodden bridal dress, "but it may be mine before the end of the year. But don't let us quarrel," she went on in a piteous way, "I'm in trouble."

"What is it?" asked Olivia, who could guess.

"Theophilus has left me. Yes! Last night he went away leaving a cold letter behind him which was to be delivered to me at the altar. And it was," wept Miss Pewsey, "that old woman Mrs. Bressy brought the note. It said that Theophilus has left me forever. And all my friends were there, and I was awaiting the happy hour, then—then" —she broke down sobbing.

Olivia was touched. Miss Pewsey had always been her enemy, yet there was something about the unhappy creature which called for sympathy.

"I am sorry for your trouble," said Mrs. Ainsleigh in a softer voice.

"No," said Miss Pewsey, drying her eyes with a very wet handkerchief, "you can't be. I never liked you, nor you me."

"That is perfectly true, and you turned my aunt against me. All the same I *am* sorry, and anything I can do shall be done."

Miss Pewsey threw herself on her knees before her enemy, who was thus heaping coals of fire on her head. "Then ask your husband to leave my Theophilus alone," she whispered. "Clarence, who has also gone, wrote to me, and said that Mr. Ainsleigh accused Theophilus of the death of my dearest Sophia."

"What!" cried Olivia, "does Mr. Burgh dare? Why he accuses Dr. Forge, himself. Rupert certainly wrote to the detective Mr. Rodgers, but Mr. Burgh has to substantiate his statement."

Miss Pewsey jumped up. "What!" she said, much more her own evil self, "did Clarence accuse my Theophilus? It's a lie—a lie. I have kept silence too long—much too long."

"About what?"

"About the murder," screamed Miss Pewsey, "it was Clarence who killed my Sophia—yes—you may look and look, Olivia—but it was Clarence himself; he took the tie from the coat-pocket. I told him you had given it to him, and—"

"But he gave it to Dr. Forge."

"He did not. Clarence took Sophia out on to the steps—at least he appointed to meet her there, to tell her about the fan. Then he strangled her, thinking your husband would be accused. Theophilus came on Clarence when he was picking up the fan. Sophia held it in her death grip, and it was some time before he could get it loose. Theophilus came, and hearing steps, Clarence ran away down to the beach. Then he returned to the ball-room by the front of the hotel."

"But the fan?"

"Theophilus Forge has it," said Miss Pewsey, setting her face, "and I expect he has taken it with him."

"Why didn't you tell this at the inquest?"

"Because I didn't. Clarence is my own sister's son. I could not see him hanged. He had to hold his tongue, although he wanted the fan back again. But I insisted that Theophilus should make the money out of it. This is Clarence's revenge. Because the fan is kept from him he threatens Theophilus; oh, Olivia, *do* ask your husband to leave the matter alone. I will give up that mortgage—"

"I can do nothing," said Olivia, "it isn't in my husband's power. He has written to Rodgers—"

"But he has not told him anything," said Miss Pewsey eagerly.

"No. He merely asked him to call."

"Then he shall see *me* and I'll tell him of Clarence's wickedness. But the fan—the fan—we'll get the money and Theophilus will come back to be loved and respected. I don't love him, but I see we can make a lot of money together. The fan," said Miss Pewsey, counting on her lean fingers, "the money from Lo-Keong—the money of Sophia and—"

"Oh!" cried Olivia in disgust, "go away, you miserable creature, and think of the hereafter."

Miss Pewsey gave a shrill laugh. "You can't help me, and your husband can't help me, so I'll go. But when I come back here, it shall be as mistress. I hate you, Olivia —I have always hated you—I—I—oh you"—she could utter no more, but, gasping, shook her fist and ran out of the window and down the avenue with an activity surprising in a woman of her years.

After dinner and while they were seated in the library, Olivia told Rupert of Miss Pewsey's visit and accusation. He declined to believe the tale. "If Burgh was guilty he wouldn't have brought an accusation against Forge," he said, "as the doctor, if this is true, knows the truth. And Forge, if innocent, would not have cleared—"

While Ainsleigh was thus explaining, the door was burst open and Mrs. Pettley, white as chalk, rushed in. "The ghost—the ghost," said she, dropping into a chair, "the monk—in the Abbey."

Anxious to learn if there was any truth in these frequent apparitions reported by Mrs. Pettley, Rupert left the swooning woman to the care of his wife and departed hastily from the room. Calling old Pettley, he went out of the front door across the lawn and into the cloisters. Pettley hobbled almost on his heels with a lantern. The

young man stopped at the entrance to the cloisters, and listened. It was raining hard and the ground was sopping wet. But beyond the drip of the rain, and the sighing of the trees, no sound could be heard. Snatching the lantern from Pettley, Rupert advanced boldly into the open, and swung the light to and fro and round about. He could see no ghost, nor any dark figure, suggestive of Abbot Raoul.

"Try the black square," piped the feeble voice of Pettley behind.

With a shrug Rupert did so. He thought that the housekeeper was mistaken as usual, and that the ghost was the outcome of her too vivid imagination. Walking deliberately to the black square where Abbot Raoul had been burnt three hundred years before, he swung the light over its bare surface. In the centre he saw something sparkle, and stooped. Then he rose with a cry. It was a fan. Rupert picked it up, opened it, and looked at it in the lantern light. There were the four beads and half a bead and the green jade leaves. The very fan itself.

CHAPTER XIX.

A VISITOR.

How came the fan there—and on the accursed square of ground where no grass would grow? Rupert was not superstitious, yet his heart gave a bound, and for the moment he felt sick. This fan was the cause of much trouble in the past; it had cost one woman her life, and it might yet claim another victim. With the fan in his hand, and the yellow light of the guttering candle in the lantern gleaming on its beauty, he stood stupidly staring, unheeding the feeble piping of Pettley's voice, as he peered in at the ruined archway.

"What's the matter, Master Rupert?" questioned the old butler with a shiver, "have you seen *It?*"

"No," said Rupert at length, and he hardly knew his own voice, so heavy and thick it was, "there's nothing to be seen."

A cry came from the old man. "Don't stand on that accursed ground, Master Rupert," he said, almost whimpering, "and to-night, of all times."

"Why to-night?" said Rupert, retreating back to the arch.

"Any night," shivered Pettley, putting his hand on his young master's arm and drawing him out of the cloisters, "it's not a good place for an Ainsleigh to be in at night. The Abbot—"

"John, I don't believe in the Abbot."

"But Anne saw him—or It. She's not the one to tell a lie."

"Mrs. Pettley is deceived in some way." Rupert considered a moment, and thrust the fan into his pocket. In the darkness, and because he turned aside the lantern light, old Pettley had not seen that anything had been picked up. "I'm going to search round," said Rupert.

The butler gave a long wail as Ainsleigh broke from his grasp. "No! no!" he cried, lifting his long hands, "not at night."

But Rupert, now quite himself, did not heed the superstitious cry. He disbelieved in ghosts more than ever. Some flesh-and-blood person had brought the fan, and recollecting Burgh's story, and what Olivia had reported of Miss Pewsey's talk that afternoon, he quite expected to find Dr. Forge lurking in the cloisters. He would search for him, and when face to face, he would demand an explanation. So Rupert swiftly and lightly walked round, holding the light high and low in the hope of discovering some crouching form. And all the time Pettley waited trembling at the door.

The rain fell softly and there was a gentle wind swinging the heavy boughs of the pines, so that a murmurous sound echoed through the cloisters like the breaking of league-long waves on a pebbly beach. For at least half an hour Rupert searched; but he could see no one, he could not even find the impression of feet, sodden as was the ground. After looking everywhere within the cloister, and in the Abbey itself, he brushed past the old butler and walked down the avenue. Here also he was at fault, as he could see no one. The gates were closed, but there was a light in the small house near at hand. Ainsleigh knocked at

the door, and shortly old Payne, holding a candle above his head, appeared, expressing surprise.

"Has any one entered the gates to-night?" asked his master.

"No, sir. I closed them at five as usual. No one has come in."

There were no signs of the gates having been climbed, and the wall which ran round the estate was so high and the top was pricked with such cruel spikes, that no one could possibly have entered that way. Old Payne insisted that no one had entered; he had heard no voices, no footsteps, and seemed much perplexed by the insistence of his young master. At length Rupert desisted from making inquiries, being perfectly assured that he would learn nothing. He returned up the avenue slowly to the mansion, wondering how it came about that Forge had entered the ground and left the fan on the very spot where Abbot Raoul had been burnt.

Mrs. Pettley had recovered from her swoon and, with her husband, had retreated to the kitchen. So Rupert learned from Olivia, and he then gave her a description of his finding the fan. She was very amazed and curious. "Show it to me," she said.

"Not just now, dear," replied Rupert, walking to the door. "I must ask Mrs. Pettley first to explain what she saw."

"She declares it was Abbot Raoul."

"Pooh! Forge masquerading as a monk, I expect. Though why he should come here and bring this infernal fan I cannot understand. What is the time, Olivia?"

"Nine o'clock," she replied; "we had dinner early."

"Yes. Well, I'll see Mrs. Pettley. You need not say

anything about the fan, and as old John didn't see me pick it up, there will be no difficulty with him."

"Why should there be any difficulty with him?" asked Mrs. Ainsleigh.

"Your aunt was killed for the sake of the fan, and the person who killed her must have been within these grounds to-night. I want to keep the matter quiet until I see Rodgers to-morrow. Then I'll explain all, and place the fan in his hands."

"Then you think Dr. Forge has been here?"

"Yes—or Clarence Burgh. But as they have left Marport, I don't see what they have to gain by remaining in a place fraught with so much danger to both."

"They can't both be guilty, Rupert."

"No. But Burgh declares that Forge strangled your aunt, and Miss Pewsey lays the blame on her nephew. But I don't believe either one of them. I shouldn't be at all surprised to learn that the assassin is Major Tidman after all. He wanted the fan badly, so as to get the money."

"But you were with him on the beach, between eleven and twelve."

"I was, and the evidence of Dr. Forge went to show that Miss Wharf was killed between those hours. But suppose, Olivia," Rupert sank his voice and drew nearer, "suppose Forge knew from the condition of the body that your aunt had been killed *before* eleven, and had procured the fan from Tidman by threatening to say so, in which case the Major could not have proved an alibi."

"It might be so," replied Mrs. Ainsleigh, "but then the body would have been found earlier."

"No. There was not a single person, so far as I know, who went down those steps. Tung-Yu certainly did—but

that was after the crime was committed, and we know he did not carry the fan with him. It is a very strange case. Perhaps after all, Tidman had already killed the woman when he joined me on the beach to smoke."

"Oh Rupert, how horrid! Was he disturbed?"

"He certainly seemed rather alarmed, but I put that down to the circumstances. He never shook off his fear of that adventure he had in Canton, and of course the mere presence of a Chinaman would make him uneasy. But he kept his own counsel. However, we can talk of this later. I must see Mrs. Pettley." And Rupert disappeared.

The housekeeper stuck to her story. She had gone into the cloisters to gather mushrooms which grew therein, and had the lantern with her. While stooping at the archway to see what she could pick she heard, even through the moaning of the wind, the swish of a long garment. The sound brought her to her feet, and—as she phrased it—with her heart in her mouth. The place was uncanny and she had seen the Abbot before. "But never so plain—oh, never so plain," wailed Mrs. Pettley, throwing her apron over her white hair and rocking. "I held the light over my head and dropped it with a screech, for there, not a yard away, Master Rupert, I saw *It*, with a long gown and a hood over its wicked white face—"

"Did you see the face?"

"I did, just as I dropped the lantern. White and wicked and evil. I dropped on my knees and said a prayer with closed eyes and then It went. I took the lantern and ran for the house for dear life, till I burst in on you and the mistress. Oh Master Rupert dear, what did you see?"

"Nothing! And I believe, Mrs. Pettley, you beheld some rascal masquerading."

"No! No! 'Twas a ghost—oh deary me, my days are numbered."

Mrs. Pettley could not be persuaded that the thing she saw was flesh and blood, so Rupert gave up trying to convince her. He returned the lantern to old John and told the couple to retire to bed. They were both white and nervous and not fit to be up. Then he came back to the drawing-room and found Olivia seated by the fire reading. At the door Rupert paused to think what a pretty picture she made in her rich dinner dress—one of Miss Wharf's gifts—and with one small hand supporting her dainty head. She looked up, as though she felt the magic of his gaze, and he approached swiftly to press a kiss on the hand she held out to him. "Well?" asked Olivia.

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. "There's nothing to be learned," said he. "Mrs. Pettley won't give in. She believes she has seen a ghost, and declares that her days are numbered. As she is nearly seventy, I dare say they are. But this fan"—he took it out of his pocket.

"Let me see it," said Olivia, stretching out her hand.

But Rupert drew it away and spread out the leaves. "No, my dear, I don't like you to handle the horrible thing. And besides you have seen it often enough in the hand of your aunt."

"Yes, but now there is an awful significance about it."

"There's blood—"

"Blood," cried his wife shuddering, "but she was strangled."

"I speak figuratively, my dear. This little trifle has cost one life, it may cost more. I am quite sure Lo-Keong's

life hangs on this fan, or he would not be so anxious to get it back. It has a secret, and I intend to learn what the secret is."

"Oh, you mean to wave it in the smoke?" said Olivia, remembering what Rupert had told her of Tung-Yu's speech.

"Yes, I do. I want to see the invisible picture. Then we may learn of this hiding-place which contains the things Lo-Keong's enemies wish to secure. I expect it is some treasonous correspondence."

"But, Rupert, the hiding-place will be in China. Lo-Keong would not send papers of that kind to be concealed in England."

"It would be the safest place," replied Rupert dryly; "however, I intend to try the experiment of waving this fan in the smoke."

"You don't know the kind of smoke."

"I can guess the kind. Olivia, do you remember that joss-stick which Mrs. Pettley found in the Abbey?"

"Yes—at the time she saw the ghost."

"Precisely. The ghost left that joss-stick behind on the first occasion, and the fan on the second. Now I shouldn't wonder if the fan had got into the hands of Hwei, and that *he* was the ghost."

"What makes you think that?"

"Well, Hwei confessed that he was lurking outside the Bristol Hotel to get a chance of killing Miss Wharf when she was lured out by Tung-Yu. That gentleman, however, played false. All the same Hwei was here, and perhaps he came up to the Abbey—"

"Why?" asked Olivia, looking perplexed.

"Ah, that I can't tell you. But I fancy the answer is to be found in this fan, as soon as we see the picture."

"But the smoke?"

"Must be made by that joss-stick. It smells like cinnamon, and is apparently a manufactured article. Hwei brought it so that he could wave the fan in its smoke and then learn the secret. But he dropped the joss-stick and—where is it, Olivia?"

"I put it in a drawer over there, after you showed it to me."

Mrs. Ainsleigh went to a rosewood cabinet and opened a drawer. She then returned with the joss-stick in her hand, and gave it to her husband, who was kneeling on the hearth-rug. "I hope it won't explode, Rupert," said Olivia nervously.

He stared. "Why should you think that?"

"Well it might have been dropped on purpose, and looks like a cracker with that red paper round it. Perhaps there's dynamite—"

"Nonsense," said Rupert, taking out a match, "however, if you are afraid, go into the next room."

"No," said Olivia seating herself, "if you are to be blown to bits, I'll be blown up with you."

They both laughed at the idea and then Rupert lighted the match. It was distinctly nervous work, however, and Olivia started back, as her husband set the joss-stick fizzling. She was leaning forward in the chair with her dark head nearly touching his fair hair. The joss-stick smoked slowly and a queer odor diffused itself through the room. Olivia sniffed. "Rupert," she said positively, "it's the same scent as was on that letter of Tung-Yu's."

"And of Lo-Keong's also," said Rupert, watching the thick bluish smoke, which now began to curl up from the joss-stick; "apparently the mandarin uses the perfume

as a kind of clew, or perhaps it is a special scent dedicated to this private god of his. I shall never understand Chinamen and I'm very sure I don't want to. Olivia, hold the stick while I wave the fan in the smoke."

Being now assured that the smoke was proceeding from a harmless article, Mrs. Ainsleigh took the stick and held it lightly, while her husband gravely waved the outspread fan in the thick smoke. The joss-stick fizzled and burned and gave out its queer smell, which made both slightly dizzy. Every now and then Rupert looked at the enamelled side of the fan, where Tung-Yu said that a picture would appear. There certainly did seem something scrawled on the smooth green sticks, and a blurred outline revealed itself. For quite ten minutes Ainsleigh continued waving, until the joss-stick burned down nearly to the root. Then he looked again, Olivia placed the still fizzling joss-stick in the fender, and peered over his shoulder. She uttered a cry when she saw the black outline of the picture, and Rupert nearly echoed it. They were looking at a drawing of the cloisters.

Yes—there were the cloisters of Royabay Abbey taken, as by a camera, from the archway. The architecture was clear enough, and the trees also. But the picture was merely evanescent, for as the fan grew cold again the outlines vanished. However, they knew that the hiding-place of the presumed papers was within the cloisters of Royabay—but in what spot? Rupert laid down the fan and propounded the problem to his wife. "The indications would be more exact."

"Yes," replied Olivia thoughtfully, and picked up the fan, "I suppose you are right, Rupert. It must have been Hwei who came to the Abbey on the night my aunt was

killed and dropped the joss-stick. Perhaps he came to see if he could find the hiding-place, without the aid of the fan."

"No," said Rupert, "Hwei is the servant of Lo-Keong, and probably knew of the hiding-place; whereas Tung-Yu, who served Hop-Sing, wanted the fan to learn about it. I expect had Tung-Yu bought the fan, he would have come here and found the papers, and then have cleared out to China to place them in his master's hands and ruin Lo-Keong."

"Are you sure there are papers hidden?" said Olivia, fingering the beads dangling from the thick yellow cord.

"I think so. It can't be gold or silver or jewels. However, what we have to do is to find what is hidden. Then when Lo-Keong comes down we can make a bargain with him. If he hands over my eight thousand, I'll give him whatever we find."

"But how are we to find the spot?" said Mrs. Ainsleigh dreamily. "Oh Rupert," she added, "it's in one of the trees. Don't you remember a tree was drawn at the side of the picture with a white line down the trunk?"

"No, I didn't see that. I saw the four trees and the stump drawn in the picture."

Mrs. Ainsleigh rattled the beads through her fingers. "Four beads and half a bead," she exclaimed; "Rupert, those stand for the four trees and for the stump."

"What makes you think so?"

"The half bead—that is the stump, and see, one of the beads is of jasper, that might be the copper-beech."

"By Jove!" Rupert jumped up, "I believe you are right."

"I am sure I am, and in the tree drawn at the side of the

picture which you did not observe, there was a white line down the trunk."

"Well," said Rupert pondering, "perhaps whatever is hidden is tied to a string or a chain and is dropped down the trunk of one of the four trees—or perhaps in the stump."

"Not in the stump," said Olivia quickly, "for then the line would be visible, while in the other trees it would be concealed in the thick foliage. I fancy the line must be down the copper-beech trunk, as there is but one red bead."

"There is but one tree though—one copper-beech, you know," said her husband. "I am inclined to think that, to make things safer, the hiding-place must be in one of the green trees signified by the jade beads. The question is which tree is it?"

Olivia looked at the fan again, and as she did so started. Rupert also raised his head. They heard the sound of wheels scrunching the gravel outside, and wondered who was arriving so late. The clock pointed to half-past ten. The servants had gone to bed, so Rupert, followed by his wife, who was rather nervous, went to the door. When Rupert opened it he found himself facing a tall handsome man in a fur cloak, and wearing a strange hat.

"Good-evening," said the stranger in the best of English. "I speak to Mr. Ainsleigh I think. I am the Marquis Lo-Keong."

CHAPTER XX.

THE MANDARIN EXPLAINS.

"I MUST apologize for this very late visit," said Lo-Keong, when he was conducted to the drawing-room by his surprised host, "but I must explain—"

"Not now, Marquis," replied Ainsleigh, giving his visitor the rank which he claimed, "you must be weary and hungry."

"No. I am perfectly well, and enjoyed a meal before I left London. If you will give my servants orders to take up my luggage, and will then hear what I have to say, you will do everything I desire."

Rupert went again to the hall to tell the two Chinese servants, which Lo-Keong had brought with him, to take the trunks up to the bedroom which the Marquis would occupy. Then he went to the back and made Mr. and Mrs. Pettley rise. Both were disturbed when they heard that a Chinese grandee was in the house. "I do hope he won't bring trouble with him," said Mrs. Pettley to her husband. "I never could abear them things, since I saw that creature who brought home the old master's baggage. And missus, as is dead, couldn't bear him either."

"He was a cock-eyed man," said old John reflectively.

"Cock-eyed yourself," retorted the housekeeper, who had a better memory, "he was one-eyed, and a nice ugly thing he looked. Ah, well, as I always says, Abbot Raoul don't walk for nothing, and this Chiner gentleman coming here means trouble."

Old John, who was much the same way of thinking himself, grew annoyed by his wife's pessimism and told her to hurry up and come to the kitchen. Then he went to see after the bedroom which his master had selected for the untoward guest. Mrs. Pettley came down to find her kitchen in the possession of two grave silent Chinamen who had lighted the fire and were boiling water for tea. "Well, I'm sure," said Mrs. Pettley, surveying both with distaste, "the idear of these furreiners taking liberties," and she sniffed at the Far East.

Meanwhile Rupert returned to the drawing-room and found the Marquis paying attentions to his wife. Lo-Keong was a tall, fine-looking man, grave and extremely polite. He had admirable manners, and his clothes were of the finest. Olivia in her rich dinner dress felt quite plainly dressed beside this gorgeous gentleman, who wore a jacket of rose-pink, a coat of grass-green satin, pale blue silk trousers, and thick white-soled green shoes. He also had a glossy pigtail woven with silk, and carried a small fan—at which Olivia shuddered. Seated in a deep arm-chair, he looked a potentate, quite out of place in that sober English drawing-room. The Marquis was very affable, and deferential to Mrs. Ainsleigh, who quite overcame her dislike to Celestials after a few moments' converse with this splendid specimen of the aristocracy of Cathay.

"You are quite sure you won't have some refreshment?" she asked.

Lo-Keong waved his slim hand graciously. "I thank you, no," said he, "and if you will allow me to explain myself, you can then retire. I am ashamed of having called at this hour. But," he looked at Rupert first and

at Olivia afterward, "my excuse is a good one. I have seen Hwei—whom you know."

Ainsleigh shuddered. "Yes, and I don't retain any very pleasant recollections of that gentleman," said he.

Lo-Keong laughed quietly. "Hwei is a true devotee of the god Kwang-Ho."

"I don't understand about that god," said Olivia.

"I have come to explain," said the Chinaman, "it is a great pity I did not come before. You would then have had no trouble about this," and he took up the famous fan which Olivia had tossed on the sofa.

"Oh!" the young couple looked at one another, and if they did not say "oh!" the expression of "oh"—an amazed "oh"—was on their faces.

Lo-Keong seemed to have his eyes everywhere, and took up the fan as if it was the most natural thing it should be lying there. "You understand," he went on in his calm well-bred voice. "I have seen Hwei and he told me everything."

"About the murder?"

"About the murder, Mrs. Ainsleigh, and about the hunt for the assassin; also about your husband's visit to London, and full details concerning the folly of Tung-Yu—my enemy's servant, who related how the picture on this," he laid a long yellow finger on the fan, "could be brought to light," his eyes wandered to the fragment of the joss-stick within the fender. "I observe that you have been clever enough to see the picture."

"Yes," said Rupert, quite amazed at this penetration, "but how do you know that?"

"Very easily. Hwei told me that he came to the cloisters one night to see that all was well—"

"He knew of the hiding-place then?" asked Olivia eagerly.

"Certainly. I have always trusted Hwei, but Tung-Yu did not know, and hence his desire to procure the fan. Hwei was here on the night poor Miss Wharf was killed, and dropped the joss-stick. You have been clever enough to make use of it. Well, now you both know where the packet is?"

"The packet?"

"Of papers which mean my life—papers connected with the Boxers, which the mandarin Hop-Sing would give much to possess."

"We know that the packet is hidden in a tree," said Rupert, "but which tree we cannot guess."

"Ah!" Lo-Keong slipped the beads through his fingers; "here is a piece of jade with a gold band round it."

"The third bead—"

"Consequently the third tree. We will look for the packet, as soon as I explain myself. The packet must be safe, as you have the fan, and I know, Mr. Ainsleigh, you are my friend, as I was the friend of your father before you."

"What!" Rupert threw back his head. "I understood from Dr. Forge that you were my enemy."

Lo-Keong frowned. "Ah! he goes as far as that," said he, then paused a moment. "I will explain."

Olivia would have interrupted, but he threw out a long arm in an imperious manner, and began his story without further preamble, playing with the fan all the time.

"My name," said the Marquis, "is Lo-Keong, and I am a native of the province of Kan-Su—"

"Where the mine is," murmured Rupert.

"Exactly, Mr. Ainsleigh. My native town is on the

Hwei River, and not far from the mine your father bought—"

"Along with Dr. Forge?"

"Pardon me, sir, but Dr. Forge did not buy it. He was merely a servant of your father's. The mine was owned by your father alone. I conducted the negotiations on behalf of the owner of the land."

"But Forge says—"

"I can guess." Lo-Keong waved his hand coldly. "He blackens my name to you, and lies about the mine. Always bad—always foul, always a liar—that man must be killed. I have spared him too long."

Olivia shuddered. "No, Marquis," said she, "I beg that there may be no more murders."

"Not in England, but when this Forge comes again to China," here the Marquis smiled in a cruel way, but made no further remark. The young people shuddered. He smiled benignly on them, and went on with his story in a calm level voice.

"My respected parent was a merchant," said he calmly, "and he gave me a fine education, of which as you know we think greatly in the Middle Kingdom. I secured the Hanlin degree, which is very high, and so became greater than my friend Hop-Sing, who failed. That success made Hop-Sing my enemy. I returned home, and Hop-Sing made trouble. It is not necessary to explain how," added the Marquis with another wave of his hand. "But the trouble resulted in my leaving my parental roof, and becoming a soldier with the Boxers, who then conspired against the Empress Dowager. But before I left my native town, I acted as the middleman between a respected resident and Mr. Markham Ainsleigh, who desired to

lease a gold mine on the Hwei River. I left him in full possession of the rights to work the mine, and Dr. Forge assisted him."

"Not as a partner?" asked Rupert breathlessly.

"By no means, Mr. Ainsleigh. Forge was a good doctor, but he knew nothing about mining. He doctored the Coolies, and attended to minor matters. Your father looked after the mine personally. I understand he learned how to do so in California."

"Yes—he was there before I was born, but—"

"Permit me to continue, Mr. Ainsleigh. Well then, I left your father in possession of the mine, and joined the Boxers. I rose to be a leader, and afterward returned to see my parents. At that time the rebellion—for that it was—proved unfortunate, so it was necessary that I should conceal myself. I took service with your father as a foreman of the mine, and I can safely say," said Lo-Keong with a certain show of emotion, "that your father saved my life. I consider myself indebted to him, and now I am indebted to his son."

"It is very good of you," said Rupert. "I need a friend."

"You have one in me," said the Marquis courteously. "But to proceed, as the night grows darker. I was your father's friend, Hop-Sing was his enemy, and Forge sided with Hop-Sing."

"But why did he do that?" asked Ainsleigh impetuously. "Forge was at college with my father—they were great friends—"

"So Mr. Markham Ainsleigh thought. But Dr. Forge was greedy and wished to have the mine to himself. Hop-Sing, who had some influence at the Imperial Court,

promised to help Dr. Forge to get rid of your father and secure the mine, provided I was ruined."

"And Forge acted this base part?"

"He did," said the mandarin quietly. "I may tell you, Mr. Ainsleigh, that I was completely in your father's confidence. He made a great deal of money out of the mine, and I arranged for it to be turned into safe investments through a third person whose name need not be mentioned. A large sum was placed out at interest and all these many years the interest has been accumulating. You will receive a handsome sum I assure you, Mr. Ainsleigh."

"But," broke in Olivia, perplexed, "Dr. Forge told my husband that the whole amount was eighteen thousand, of which ten thousand belonged to him and eight thousand to Rupert."

"Dr. Forge places the money obtained from the mine at a low figure," said the Chinaman smiling; "what the amount is, I shall tell you later. Meanwhile I must explain the intrigue which led to your father's murder—"

"Ah!" Rupert leaped to his feet, "then he *was* murdered?"

"He was—by the emissary of Hop-Sing. Be calm, Mr. Ainsleigh, and be seated. Your father died quietly enough by strangulation—"

"What! Was he killed in the same way as Miss Wharf?"

Lo-Keong bowed his stately head. "Yes, and by the same person—"

"Tung-Yu," cried Olivia, starting to her feet in her turn.

"Exactly, Mrs. Ainsleigh. I know that Tung-Yu strangled Mr. Markham Ainsleigh, and I believe that he strangled your aunt."

Rupert sat down on the sofa and drew his wife down beside him. "But Tung-Yu was the man who was to buy the fan—"

"Quite so." Lo-Keong folded and unfolded the fan calmly. "You know of the god Kwang-Ho."

"Yes—but I can't understand—"

"Naturally," the Marquis laughed quietly, "that is a thing beyond the comprehension of a Western barbarian—your pardon for so calling you. Kwang-Ho," went on the mandarin, "is an ancestor of mine who lived during the Ming dynasty. He was a sage, and very famous, so I took him as my private god."

Olivia looked amazed and a little shocked. "A private god. I never knew that any one could have a private god, even in China," she said.

"If you have read Roman history, Mrs. Ainsleigh, you will remember the Lares and Penates, which were something of the same kind. I was very unfortunate with the public gods of my country, so I chose Kwang-Ho to be my genius—my destiny. I had an image made and offered him incense. It was, in fact, what you might call ancestral worship; only I looked upon Kwang-Ho as one who could control my destiny. I was right," said Lo-Keong empathically, "for, from the moment I sacrificed to Kwang-Ho, my fortunes changed."

"In what way?" asked Rupert, wondering that a clever man like this should talk so superstitiously.

"In every way. The priest of my new god Kwang-Ho consulted the deity and ordered that I should leave the Boxers and attach myself to the party of the Empress Dowager, who was to be all-powerful in the future. I think," added Lo-Keong smiling blandly, "that Kwang-

Ho was right in that. Who is so powerful as my august mistress?"

"True enough," admitted Ainsleigh impatiently, "but what has this to do with the death of my father?"

"Patience, Mr. Ainsleigh. I arranged to leave the Boxers. We were fighting for the Emperor, who was then being crushed by the Empress Dowager. I had many papers showing my devotion to the Boxer cause and to His Imperial Majesty. These papers I intended to destroy, but remembering that some day the Emperor might overcome the Empress, I decided to keep the papers. They would show that I had worked for the Emperor, and thus my fortunes would be secure should His Imperial Majesty reign alone. As yet," added Lo-Keong with a shrug, "he has not reigned alone and my august mistress still rules the destinies of the Middle Kingdom."

"Ah! And if she got those papers?—"

"She would cut off my head," replied Lo-Keong quietly; "so now you see why I thought it best to conceal them. I wished to preserve the papers so as to keep myself in favor with the Emperor when he became supreme, and I wished to conceal them from the Empress Dowager and her spies while she ruled China. You understand?"

"We do," said the young couple. "So you used the means of the fan to tell where they were hidden?" asked Rupert.

The mandarin assented. "I did. I spoke to your father about this plan of concealment. I knew the papers would not be safe in China, as the emissaries of Hop-Sing would find them, and I should be ruined, so on the suggestion of your father, I decided to hide them in England."

"But why in the Abbey?"

"Mr. Markham Ainsleigh's suggestion, sir. He said that this place had been in the possession of his family for years and would likely continue to remain under the Ainsleigh—"

"Alas—alas!" sighed Rupert.

"Not at all, sir," was Lo-Keong's brisk reply, "you will have enough money to keep this place, I assure you. But to continue—Your father, whose health was very bad, arranged to take his money back to this place, and to take also the papers I wished to hide. We arranged that they should be concealed in the third tree, and then I hit upon the plan of an invisible picture on the fan with the assistance of the beads to identify the hiding-place."

"But was that necessary when you knew the hiding-place?"

"I wished my heirs to benefit by my services to the Emperor during the Boxer rising; and they were not to know of the existence of these papers till I died. So you will understand—"

"Yes! It's very interesting, so please go on."

"Well, while we were arranging these things Forge went to Pekin, and got a concession to work the mine from the Empress through the influence of Hop-Sing. Meanwhile I arranged to enter the service of my Imperial Mistress, and left your father ill of dysentery."

"Of which, according to Forge, he died."

"No," said the mandarin decisively, "he was recovering. He had the packet and the fan which he was to take to this place. Hwei was to go with him, and design the invisible picture and hide the packet. I went to see about letting your father have the money which I had invested for him.

All was ready and he was winding up his affairs. Then the emissary of Hop-Sing strangled your father—"

"Tung-Yu," said Rupert, much agitated.

"I have already said that," replied the Marquis rather tartly, "your father died, and Forge obtained the mine. But he did not hold it long. I represented that Forge had obtained the death of Mr. Markham Ainsleigh through Hop-Sing. The Empress took my view. Hop-Sing was disgraced and I was promoted. Forge had to leave China for the time being, but he came back several times. I sent Hwei to this place with your father's effects and with the fan. He concealed the packet and drew the picture. Your mother was alive then, Mr. Ainsleigh, and Hwei showed her the fan, though he did not tell her the secret."

"Ah!" cried Rupert, "now I remember where I saw the fan."

"Yes," Lo-Keong nodded, "as a boy of five you may remember it."

"I certainly do. But, Marquis, why did you not send my father's money to my mother?"

"Ah! She died, and although I knew you were the heir and in the guardianship of Forge who was your enemy, I could do nothing. Hop-Sing got the upper hand again and I was in my turn disgraced. Then Hop-Sing learned about the papers, and about the fan being the means of finding the hiding-place. He ordered Tung-Yu to find the fan. Hwei was bringing the fan back from England to me. He was assaulted when he landed in China, but he luckily had given the fan to a brother of his, so Hop-Sing could not find it. Then the brother was killed and a coolie, who knew nothing of the fan, took

possession of it. Afterward, I wanted the fan. Hop-Sing told me what he suspected, so I applied to the god Kwang-Ho. The god declared, through his priest, that Hop-Sing was to come with me to the shrine. He did so, and thus, bitter enemies as we were, we came for a time to be in peace."

"And then the arrangement was made?"

"Yes. The god said that an equal chance must be given to good and evil. Hwei was appointed to find the fan for me, and to give death to the person who had it. Tung-Yu acted for Hop-Sing and was to give a reward of not less than five thousand pounds, so that the person who held the fan should be rich for life. Each was to hold sway for twenty-four hours. I caused this to be published in the Chinese newspaper in Pekin. The coolie heard it and being fearful lest he should be killed, he kept the fan for years and said nothing. Then Major Tidman—"

"Ah! I know! He came to see how my father died."

"Quite so, Mr. Ainsleigh, and the coolie, knowing the fan was connected with the death—for he afterward went to Kan-Su mine and asked questions—gave the fan to the Major to get rid of it, and—"

"And we know the rest," said Rupert rising. "Tidman gave it to Dr. Forge, and he gave it to you—or rather you caused it to be taken from him."

"No," said the mandarin, "that is not true. I never saw the fan till now. All these years I have never set eyes on it."

"But Dr. Forge said—"

"Whatever he said he speaks falsely," said Lo-Keong; "but it is growing late, Mr. Ainsleigh, and I see that your wife is weary. Let us retire and I shall tell you the rest

of the story to-morrow. But before I go to rest," added the mandarin decidedly, "I must assure myself that the packet is still in the trunk of the third tree."

Rupert was quite ready and lighted the lantern. The two men went to the Abbey into the pitchy darkness, and walked to the third tree near the bare spot. Lo-Keong, who seemed to be able to see in the dark like a cat, looked round, and laid his finger on a huge oak. "This is the tree," said he confidently.

"But I can't very well see," said Rupert; "from which side do you count?"

"From the left to right," explained the mandarin. "In these robes, Mr. Ainsleigh, I cannot climb the tree; will you please to do so? You will find the hollow trunk and the line. Pull it up; the papers will be at the end. Bring them to me if you please."

So speaking Lo-Keong took the light and Rupert, although in thin evening dress, began to climb the tree. Luckily it was not difficult as the branches hung low, but it was disagreeable on account of the dripping wet. Every movement shook down much moisture. However, the active young man disappeared in the foliage and then felt round. He could not see, and came down to get the lantern, which the Chinaman passed to him. Then he found that the trunk of the tree was broken off, amidst the thick branches, and that the centre was hollow. He espied a rusty thin chain, and pulled it up. At the end there was a small box, which he brought down. With an exclamation of joy Lo-Keong took it. It opened easily in his hand.

"Gone," cried the Marquis in a voice of anguish.

He spoke truly. The box was empty.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHO IS GUILTY?

NEXT morning at the early hour of nine o'clock Orlando Rodgers drove up to Royabay filled with curiosity. He had received Rupert's letter which summoned him to come down on matters connected with the murder, and he was eager to learn details. Rodgers himself had been unlucky. He had traced the Stormy Petrel to the Thames near Rotherhithe, and had learned from the captain that two Chinamen had hired the boat for a couple of days. They went down to Marport and had gone ashore early in the evening. They came on board again after midnight, and then had requested to be put ashore at Rotherhithe. The captain confessed that he had been paid well for the job, and thought—with a wink—that there was no chance of his knowing his employers again.

Rodgers of course recognized that Tung-Yu and Hwei in their queer partnership had hired the yacht—which it seems was a public boat any one could take for a period—and he knew also that the den where Rupert and Clarence had met with their adventures was in Rotherhithe. He learned of this from no less a person than Mr. Burgh himself, for the buccaneer called at the police office in London to ask if the Chinamen had been caught. Rodgers had extracted a full account of the adventures, and had gone to the den only to find it empty, and the Chinamen conspicuous by their absence. Burgh himself had not returned as he promised, and the detective was annoyed at this,

after he heard Rupert's story. Had he known what this was, he certainly would have arrested Burgh there and then, for participation in the murder. But the astute Clarence, in telling his Penters Alley adventure, had taken care not to incriminate himself.

On arrival the detective was shown into the drawing-room where Rupert was sitting with the stately mandarin. Olivia was not present, as she had heard quite enough about the fan, and wished to hear no more, not even the end of Lo-Keong's very interesting story. Rodgers recognized that Lo-Keong was of a different type of Celestial from Tung-Yu and Hwei, and paid him great deference. He explained to Rupert his ill-success with the yacht Stormy Petrel, and detailed the interview with Clarence.

"I wish I had told you about him in my letter," said Rupert jumping up, much annoyed with himself; "you could have arrested him."

And when Rodgers heard the story, he blamed Ainsleigh as much as he blamed himself for not having risked an arrest on suspicion.

"But you know, sir," said he huffily, "Burgh really didn't give himself away. I could do nothing to him—or to the captain of the Stormy Petrel either, on what evidence I had. As to those Chinamen—"

"Ah!" said Lo-Keong, "you must let me deal with them, Mr. Rodgers."

"Can you deal with Tung-Yu?"

The mandarin drew down the corners of his mouth. "I think so," said he; "it is my belief that he has the papers."

"What papers, sir?"

Lo-Keong, seeing it was absolutely necessary to make

things plain, if he wanted to procure his precious packet, related almost word for word the story he had told on the previous night. "So you see," he observed, "Tung-Yu probably strangled Miss Wharf, as formerly he strangled Mr. Markham Ainsleigh. I discussed this with Hwei, and he, knowing that Tung-Yu had betrayed him once, was much of the same opinion."

"But if Tung-Yu has the papers, why did he write to Tidman?" argued Rupert, not inclined to take this view.

"Probably to throw Hwei off the scent. Tung-Yu knows well enough that if he started for China, Hwei would suspect he had the papers, and would follow him to get them."

"By murder?"

"Probably," said the mandarin indifferently; "and after all, sir, why not? Tung-Yu killed your father and Miss Wharf. Hwei is watching him, and if he can make sure that Tung-Yu has my parcel, he will kill him—with my approval," ended Lo-Keong calmly.

"Wait a bit," said Rodgers, also coolly, though the speech astonished him not a little; "when you talked to Hwei, you did not know that the papers had been stolen?"

"No. But he who has the fan has the papers. Hwei and I both thought that Tung-Yu had the fan, and therefore Hwei watches him. I came down unexpectedly last night instead of waiting, so that I might assure myself that the packet was safe. But only a short time before, Mr. Ainsleigh found the fan. Tung-Yu must have come down and taken the papers."

Rupert nodded. "Certainly. Without doubt he was the ghost Mrs. Pettley saw, and when she came on him

suddenly, he dropped the fan and fled. He must have climbed the wall of the park in spite of the spikes."

Lo-Keong smiled sourly. "I do not think anything, spikes or otherwise, would have kept Tung-Yu from gaining possession of those papers. And of course he knew the way to make the picture visible."

"How was that? I thought only you and my father and Hwei—"

"Ah!" said the mandarin calmly; "it seems that Tung-Yu overheard the discussion between myself and your father as to the hiding of the papers and the plan of the fan. When he strangled Markham Ainsleigh, he hoped to find the packet at once. But Hwei secured both the fan and the packet. I have told you how they came to England, and how Hwei gave the fan to his brother. The brother was killed by accident, and the coolie I spoke of found the fan in his clothing, knowing nothing of its significance. Then he learned the truth from the notice I put in the Pekin paper, and was afraid lest he should offend the god Kwang-Ho. No, he was not afraid of death—few of us are in China. But the anger of a god is different; it means ages of torment and the chance of being born again in the belly of some creeping animal. So the coolie kept the fan, till he found an opportunity of giving it to a foreign devil, in the person of Major Tidman. I can't understand how he knew the Major wanted the fan, save that he must have heard that Tidman was searching for news as to the death of Markham Ainsleigh. The coolie then knew, from inquiries at the mine, that the fan was connected with the death, and thus that the god Kwang-Ho might have appointed the death of Markham. Yes," said the mandarin complacently, "the coolie was afraid of the god,

and no doubt was glad when Major Tidman took the fan."

Rodgers stared as Lo-Keong spoke. "It's rum to hear a gentleman like yourself talk this way, sir," he said.

"Ah!" smiled the mandarin, "our Eastern ways are different from yours."

"Yes," said the detective, "but you are so clever, that I don't see how you can believe in all this stuff about the private god."

Lo-Keong waved his hand imperatively. "Let us not speak of that, or we anger Kwang-Ho. He is the controller of my destiny. Rather let us see how we can recover my papers from Tung-Yu."

"If he has them," put in Rupert perplexedly. "And if so, Hwei will get them back."

"Assuredly," replied the mandarin, "the first attempt that Tung-Yu makes to leave England for our own land, Hwei will guess the truth, and will kill him to get the fan or the papers."

"But the fan is here."

"Yes. Hwei, however, thinks Tung-Yu has it. I shall tell him that Tung-Yu has taken the papers."

"But by breaking the agreement come to before the god, won't Kwang-Ho be angry, Marquis?"

"Hwei does not mind, he is my slave and will do anything for me. No—no," added the Marquis calmly, "as Tung-Yu first disobeyed the god, in not bringing Miss Wharf to meet with her doom at the hands of Hwei, Kwang-Ho will give him up to my vengeance."

Neither of the Europeans could make anything of this. "What we want to know," said Ainsleigh, speaking for himself and Rodgers, "is, how did the fan get back to you?"

"I told you last night it did not get back," replied Lo-Keong. "I heard from Hwei that the fan was given to Miss Wharf by Burgh—but how he got it—" Lo-Keong shook his head.

"From a pirate in Chinese waters."

"No. The fan never came back to China." Lo-Keong took a paper out of his pocket. "I should have given that to you last night. It will show you why Hwei and Tung-Yu came to look for the fan in England," and he gave the paper to Rupert.

The young man read it. It was in scratchy female handwriting, and was to the effect that the fan of the Marquis was in the possession of a certain person in England. No name was signed to this paper, and after Rodgers had read it, Lo-Keong took it again and laid it on the table. "So you see," he remarked, "when I got that letter, I knew the fan was in England. I sent Hwei to search for it, and of course Tung-Yu on behalf of Hop-Sing came also. They could not find who had written the letter, and advertised the fan as you know."

"Then Burgh told a lie," said Rupert.

Lo-Keong opened his mouth to speak, but before he could do so, Mrs. Ainsleigh entered with a sheet of foolscap in her hand. "I beg your pardon for interrupting you, gentlemen," she said excitedly, "but here is something you should know. Rupert," she turned to her husband and thrust the paper into his hand. "It's from Dr. Forge."

"What!" cried Ainsleigh astonished. "Has he dared to write?"

"Yes, and he writes to some purpose. Read it out, Rupert. I am sure the Marquis and Mr. Rodgers will be glad to hear."

"If it bears on the case," hesitated the detective.

"It does," answered Olivia seating herself, "listen."

Rupert glanced at the heading of the letter. "He gives London as his address," he said, "so he apparently is afraid of being caught."

"Read, dear," said Mrs. Ainsleigh impatiently.

Thus adjured Rupert began. "My dear Mrs. Ainsleigh," said Forge in his communication, "I write to you rather than your husband, as I think you will judge me fairer than he will."

"As if I could," put in Mrs. Ainsleigh impatiently.

"I am not a good man, and I never pretended to be. But I have been poor all my life, and the lack of money is the cause of my having acted in a way which otherwise I should not have done. There is much truth in Becky Sharp's remark that any one can be good on five thousand a year. Had I possessed that amount this letter would never have been written. As it is, I write, because I hear that the Marquis Lo-Keong is in England, and he will, no doubt, tell your husband his own story."

"Which is not creditable to Forge," said the Marquis suavely.

Rupert nodded and proceeded. . . . "I was at college with Markham Ainsleigh, your husband's father, and he believed in me. But I was always jealous of him, as he was handsomer than I was; he possessed an ancient and honored name, and was fairly well off. I was born of poor parents and was of humble origin. Markham certainly helped me with money and with influence, so that I obtained my degree."

"And a nice way he repaid his obligations," said Olivia sharply.

"He's frank enough about his baseness at all events," said Rupert, and then continued the letter. "Markham wanted money, and as the doctor of a liner to Hong-Kong, I had heard of a little-worked gold mine on the Hwei River. I told Markham about it, and proposed that he should go to China to work the mine. He agreed, and took me with him, as he thought that my medical knowledge would benefit him."

"Does Forge say he owned part of the mine?" asked Lo-Keong.

"No. Listen," said Rupert, reading slowly. "I was merely the doctor, as Markham bought the rights to work the mine with his own money. But he promised me a share, and my share now amounts to ten thousand pounds."

"That is true in a way," said Lo-Keong; "out of the money I pay you, Mr. Ainsleigh, this man can certainly claim that amount."

"Then what I receive must be a large sum," said Rupert.

The Chinaman smiled faintly. "Much larger than you think," said Lo-Keong; "pardon my interruption and proceed."

Rupert continued. "But I was not satisfied with my share, and wanted all the money. Lo-Keong had an enemy called Hop-Sing, and he promised if I could ruin Lo-Keong that he would put Markham out of the way, and give me the money which had been obtained by working the mine. I knew that Markham had never sent any money home, as he wanted to wait until he could become a millionaire, and then return to astonish his wife, and restore the splendors of Royabay. I therefore saw Hop-Sing—"

"I think you can leave all that out, Mr. Ainsleigh," said Lo-Keong, "it is the story I told you."

"So it is," said Rupert, running his eyes down the closely written page. "Well—hum—hum," he picked up the thread of the tale lower down. "It seems," he said speaking to himself, "that Hop-Sing fell into disgrace, and Forge could not get the money. He went to China several times, as Hop-Sing recovered his position—"

"And I fell into disgrace," said the Marquis; "the Empress is a woman, you know—pardon me, Mrs. Ainsleigh—and whimsical."

"Well," said Rupert, smiling, "you seem to have been up and down several times. When Hop-Sing was in favor, Forge went to China, but the mandarin refused to help him to get the money which was under the control of Lo-Keong, unless the fan was obtained. Forge learned the conditions of the fan, and finally got it from the Major. He took it to England and locked it up in a cabinet. But he was afraid to take it to China or use it in case Hwei should kill him."

"And Hwei would have killed him," said the Marquis; "it was as well that Forge was so careful. But how did he lose the fan?"

"Miss Pewsey took it," said Rupert, glancing at the letter.

"A woman!" the Marquis took the note from the table and passed it to Mrs. Ainsleigh. "Tell me, madam, is that a woman's handwriting?"

Olivia looked surprised. "It is Miss Pewsey's handwriting."

"Ah!" said Rupert, "so she wrote to Lo-Keong telling him the fan was in England. Listen to what the doctor

says," and he began to read again. "Miss Pewsey came to my house and was very friendly. She wanted me to marry her, saying she was trying to get Miss Wharf to leave her the money that should have been left to you, Mrs. Ainsleigh."

"Ah!" said Olivia significantly, "so she *did* work for that. Go on."

The letter went on as follows: "I didn't like Miss Pewsey, who was old and ugly and evil—much worse than I ever was, in my worst days. But she haunted my house and I got used to her. I used to smoke opium, and grew very ill. In fact on more than one occasion I became delirious. Miss Pewsey came and nursed me. She took advantage of my delirium to learn the whole story of the fan, and learned also—don't be startled at this, Mrs. Ainsleigh—that through me Markham had lost his life."

"We know that from the Marquis," said Rodgers; "but I suspect Dr. Forge wouldn't have spoken out had he not guessed the Marquis would tell the whole yarn. Go on, Mr. Ainsleigh."

"Miss Pewsey," went on the letter, "insisted that I should marry her, or else she threatened to reveal the story to Rupert. I was unwilling that this should be, as I thought—and very rightly—that I should get into trouble."

"And he would have," Rupert broke off grimly to explain. "I should have shaken the life out of him. However, to continue," and he again began to read this highly interesting letter. "I therefore agreed to marry her, but always sought an opportunity of escape. During one of my insensible fits after a bout of opium smoking, Miss Pewsey took the key from my watch-chain and opening the cabinet gained possession of the fan. I denied this to

Major Tidman at Miss Pewsey's behest, or else Miss Pewsey would have denounced me."

"Not she," said Rodgers, chuckling; "she would have lost her husband had she done so."

"She has lost him in any case," said Olivia, "but I can tell you what is in the rest of the letter, as I see Rupert is tired of reading. Miss Pewsey gave the fan to Clarence to give to me—"

"To win your favor," said Rupert.

"No. To bring about my death. Miss Pewsey thought if I was out of the way she would get Aunt Sophia to leave her the money."

"What a wicked woman!" said Lo-Keong; "we have none such in China."

"Well," went on Olivia rapidly, "Miss Pewsey wrote to the Marquis saying the fan was in England—"

"Here is the letter," said Rodgers, nodding toward the epistle.

"Yes. How strange I should see it, almost immediately after Dr. Forge wrote," said Mrs. Ainsleigh innocently.

"Miss Pewsey laid her plans well," said Rupert, looking again at the letter; "she intended to tell Hwei that Olivia had the fan, so that she should be killed. But Olivia refused the fan, and Miss Pewsey made Clarence give it to Miss Wharf, so that the poor lady might be killed. But Miss Pewsey delayed the death at the hands of Hwei by holding her tongue till a will was made in her favor. Chance favored her, for she got the will altered."

"By learning of our marriage when she played the spy," said Olivia.

"Quite so," said Ainsleigh, "she then read the adver-

tisement and knew that the two men, Hwei and Tung-Yu, were in England. She wrote and told them that Miss Wharf had the fan. The letter was sent shortly before the ball, and after the new will was made. Tung-Yu therefore came down to the ball to get the fan. This was not what Miss Pewsey wanted, as she desired Hwei to kill the woman."

"She knew about the god Kwang-Ho then?" asked Lo-Keong.

"I think so, but Forge isn't clear on that point. However, he declares that he does not know who killed Miss Wharf, nor who has the fan. He was told by Clarence how he, Burgh, had accused him to the Chinamen, and then grew fearful. Also, he heard that the Marquis was in England, and so he knew the whole story would come out. As he dreaded arrest, he fled."

"But he could have prevented Burgh from speaking," said Olivia; "you know, Rupert, how Mr. Burgh told you that Forge knew things about him."

"I dare say if the Marquis had not come to England, Forge would have silenced Clarence and fought the matter out. But he knew that the truth about my father's death would be told by the Marquis, and also dreaded lest he should be accused of Miss Wharf's murder. He says that Clarence never gave him the tie as he says he did, and declares that he was in the card-room all the evening."

"How does he end the letter?" asked Rodgers.

Rupert read the last words. "So I write you this, Mrs. Ainsleigh, to show you that I am innocent of the death of your aunt. I see that the game is up and that I'll never get the ten thousand from Lo-Keong. Also, if I remain, I shall have to marry Miss Pewsey and cannot bear the

idea. When you get this I'll be far away on the sea on a voyage to a land I need not particularize."

"Not China, I hope," said the Marquis; "if he comes there again, I shall have to kill him. He deserves to be punished for having brought about the death of my friend Markham Ainsleigh. What is to be done now, gentlemen? We are no further on than before."

"We certainly don't know who had the fan—" said Rodgers.

"Or who has the packet," put in Olivia.

"Tung-Yu has it, I am sure," said Lo-Keong.

"I don't agree with you, Marquis," said the detective. "Tung-Yu and Hwei certainly cleared back to Rotherhithe by that yacht, but if the fan had been on board Hwei would have spotted it."

"Tung-Yu is very cunning," said the Marquis doubtfully.

"Well," said Rupert, folding Forge's letter up, "I suggest that the Marquis should offer a large reward for the fan with his own name appended. Then whosoever has the packet will bring it. For of course," added Rupert shrewdly, "those who had the fan—if more than one—will have the packet."

"Tung-Yu—Tung-Yu," said the Marquis, shaking his head; "however, I will try the advertisement and appoint a place. I am willing to give a large sum for the packet."

"And I am prepared to arrest the person who brings the packet as the murderer of Miss Wharf," said Rodgers. "You leave the thing to me, Marquis."

"Come with me to London, my friend," said Lo-Keong, "and we will write the advertisement. I shall reward you largely, if you get this packet back again."

"And what will you do, Rupert?" asked Olivia eagerly.

Her husband looked up. "I shall hunt for the packet on my own account."

"Good!" said Lo-Keong in his stately manner; "we will see who is fortunate enough to bring me the packet and earn," he looked at Rupert impressively, "one hundred thousand pounds."

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER-EVENTS.

RODGERS went to London with the Marquis Lo-Keong that very day, and Rupert wanted to go also. But Olivia objected to this; she feared lest her husband should be wounded again. "I don't wish to lose you, darling," said Mrs. Ainsleigh coaxingly.

"But the money," said Rupert dubiously.

"You mean the hundred thousand pounds," said Olivia. "That will be paid to you by the Marquis. It is rightfully your own."

"Humph! It seemed to me that Lo-Keong hinted he would pay the money to whomsoever brought him the packet. In that case Rodgers—"

"Nonsense!" said Olivia quickly; "I am quite sure the Marquis means well to both of us. No doubt he will reward Rodgers largely, should he get the packet; but he will give you your father's money."

"All the same I should like to hunt for the packet on my own account, Olivia," said Rupert obstinately.

"Let those hunt to whom the packet is of value."

"But I don't believe that this advertisement will bring forth anything," argued Ainsleigh frowning; "if Tung-Yu has the packet, he certainly won't pass it along to Lo-Keong. If Burgh stole it, he will be afraid lest Hwei, who is in Lo-Keong's pay, should kill him. As to Tidman—"

"You thought he was guilty," said Olivia, smiling.

"And I still have my doubts," rejoined her husband. "So I'll call at the Bristol and have a talk."

This conversation took place the day after the mandarin had departed, and Rupert was worrying about the exciting chase for the packet, which he foresaw would take place. However, as Olivia insisted he should not risk his life again with Asiatics, he interested himself still in the case by talking it over with Major Tidman. On arriving at the Bristol, he was shown up at once to Tidman's room, and found the Major spick and span as usual, but greatly excited.

"I was just coming up to see you," said the Major, "look here!" and he handed Rupert the morning's copy of *The Daily Telegraph.*

Ainsleigh looked at the place indicated by the Major, and saw the advertisement asking for the return of the fan, on delivery of which the sum of five thousand would be paid. "I see that the Marquis has lost no time," said Rupert, throwing down the paper; "he and Rodgers must have inserted the advertisement at once."

"Oh!" said the Major staring, "so you know?"

"Yes. Lo-Keong and Rodgers were with me yesterday."

"Lo-Keong! Why that is the man who owns the fan."

"Exactly. He is a Marquis, and high in the service of the Empress Dowager of China. As to the fan—" Rupert rapidly detailed how it had been found in the cloisters and related also the subsequent discovery, that the box attached to the chain in the tree trunk was empty. "And the man who took the fan from Miss Wharf's dead body stole the packet," said Rupert, "so it is not likely he will risk arrest by coming forward to give the papers to Lo-Keong."

Tidman sat down astounded at these revelations. "I wish I had been present," said he; "I was always curious about the fan's secret. A very ingenious device, Ainsleigh."

"Very," assented Rupert dryly. Then he cast a sidelong look on the Major, and spoke to the point. "You had nothing to do with the stealing of the fan, I hope, Major?"

"I!" cried Tidman, bouncing from his seat like an india-rubber ball.

"Well, you see," went on Rupert, "we met on the beach after eleven, but it is just possible, in spite of Forge's evidence, that Miss Wharf may have been killed before then."

"And you believe that I killed her? Thank you, Ainsleigh."

"My good friend," rejoined the young man calmly, "Lo-Keong believes that Tung-Yu broke his oath before the god, and strangled Miss Wharf. But I disagree with him, as Tung-Yu could have procured the fan by milder means the next day. Hwei could not have strangled the woman, as he was haunting the Abbey grounds to see if the packet was still safe. Forge, in a letter to my wife, insists that he never got the tie, and certainly did not kill Miss Wharf, so—"

"So you have narrowed it down to me," cried Tidman, in a burst of indignation; "it's too bad of you, Ainsleigh. I am not a thin-skinned man by any means; but I do feel this very deeply. I swear," the Major flung up his hand dramatically, "I swear that I never possessed the tie and I never killed Miss Wharf and I never took the fan and—"

"That's all right," interrupted Rupert; "if you did not take the tie, you certainly could not have strangled the

woman. After all, perhaps I have been too hard on you, Major."

"Ah!" said Tidman angrily, "you are prepared to take my word for it now, unsupported by other evidence. Your accusation can't be made seriously, Ainsleigh?"

"Well, upon my soul," said Rupert, passing his hand through his hair, "I really don't know what to think or say. This case seems to grow more mystical at every step. I admit that, as you deceived me at the time we discussed the advertisement—"

"You think I deceived you again? Well I did not. That was my one and only deception. I wanted the fan in order to procure money, I admit; but the danger of being killed by Hwei instead of being rewarded by Tung-Yu was too great. I dropped the matter."

"Then who do you think is guilty?"

"Clarence Burgh. Oh, I am sure of it. He admits that Miss Pewsey told him the tie was in the overcoat pocket. No doubt he took it out and used it to incriminate you. Then again, Burgh learned from Tung-Yu how the picture could be rendered visible—"

"True enough," mused Rupert; "well, he might be guilty. And he certainly was in the cloisters one day—"

"So as to examine the place," said the Major. "And afterward, he came at night in the monk's disguise, knowing about the ghost and the legend. He was startled when he secured the packet, and left the fan by accident on the black square."

"Or by design," said Ainsleigh, "remembering the prophecy which says that 'gold will come from the holy ashes.' If I get this one hundred thousand pounds the prophecy will certainly be fulfilled, in a sort of way. It was in-

directly owing to the fan that Lo-Keong told me of the money my father made in China, and through the fan, when the packet is restored, he intends to give the money to me."

"Oh, humbug!" said the Major contemptuously. "I don't believe in that foolish rhyme a bit. But are you of my opinion that Burgh is guilty?"

"Yes—in the way you put it, it seems probable."

"Well then," said Tidman angrily and striking the table with his fist. "I have had enough of being suspected, so I'll help you to hunt down the assassin. I *must* know who killed Miss Wharf, or else you will be accusing me again. See here," and he threw a paper on the table.

It was a square of yellow paper, strongly perfumed, which asked the Major to bring the fan to the den in Penters Alley. "You showed me this before," said Rupert. "I went up on your behalf."

"Look at the date," said Tidman pointing; "it's a new invitation. I think Tung-Yu—who writes the letter—believes I killed the woman and have the fan after all. Well, last time, you went on my behalf; this time, danger or no danger, I'll go myself. You can come if you like."

"I shall certainly come," said Rupert, jumping up. Olivia does not want me to proceed further in this matter, but, now that you are going, I'll go too. Tung-Yu can't know that the fan is in my hands, or that the packet is missing."

"He's not so clever as I thought he was," said Tidman coolly, "or he wouldn't have bungled this affair as he has done. I am not afraid of him, now. But you see that the appointment is for to-morrow night at nine o'clock."

"At Penters Alley under the lantern. Exactly—the

same place. But as Rodgers knows of my adventure, I wonder Tung-Yu risks another meeting. Besides, Rodgers told me he had been to the den and found both Chinamen gone."

"Oh, thunderbolts never strike in the same spot twice," said Tidman; "it is the safest place. Rodgers, having gone once, will not go again. Well, will you come?"

"Yes," said Rupert firmly, and went back to the Abbey, to persuade his wife to let him make one more attempt to solve the mystery.

Olivia was obdurate at first, but after a time she yielded, though she assured Rupert she should be miserable all the time he was away. "And *do* take care of yourself," she said.

"Of course, I'll take every care," replied her husband; and so it was arranged that Rupert should go up to town with Major Tidman by the six o'clock train the next evening, and proceed to Penters Alley, to see Tung-Yu, and learn, if possible, the truth.

Olivia's attention was somewhat taken off the projected expedition to the wilds of Rotherhithe, by a visit from Lady Jabe. That eccentric female, looking more like a judge than ever, and dressed in a most manly fashion, appeared, with a shining face, to announce that Chris was engaged to marry Lotty Dean.

"It's most delightful," said Lady Jabe; "her father is merely a retired grocer, but I have consented to overlook that, if he settles some money on the young couple."

"And has he consented?" asked Olivia languidly. She did not take much interest in the affairs of Mr. Walker.

"Yes. Mr. Dean has allowed his daughter a thousand a year, paid quarterly," said Lady Jabe amiably, "and

that, with what Chris earns at the office, will keep us nicely."

"Us?" echoed Mrs. Ainsleigh, smiling.

"Certainly," was Lady Jabe's calm reply. "I have been a mother to Chris, and I intend to be a mother to Lotty. I shall look after the house, and control the purse; otherwise the young pair may get into the bankruptcy court."

Olivia privately thought that under Lady Jabe's care the young couple would have a bad time, even though they might be free from bankruptcy. "What does Mr. Walker say?"

"Oh, Chris is delighted. He had better be. I'd like to see him cross me, dear Olivia. I've broken his spirit thoroughly. Lotty certainly is a trifle difficult, but I'll break her also by degrees."

"I think you should leave Mr. and Mrs. Walker to manage their own affairs," said Olivia indignantly

"Oh, dear me, no," replied Lady Jabe calmly, "that would never do. A couple of babies, my dear Olivia, who need a firm hand. I'll look after them and receive a small sum for doing so. My late husband did not leave me well off," she went on confidentially, "so it is necessary that I should do the best for myself. But now that's all settled, and I'm glad you are pleased."

"Not with your proposed arrangement, Lady Jabe."

"Oh, yes, you are, dear Olivia. Nothing could be better, whatever you may say. And now to talk of other and less pleasing matters. Miss Pewsey, who robbed you of your inheritance, is about to leave Marport. Yes—you may look surprised: but she is selling Ivy Lodge and intends to go to America."

"In search of the doctor?" asked Mrs. Ainsleigh doubtfully.

"Quite so. I understand that Dr. Forge has gone there. But just think what a brazen woman Miss Pewsey must be to follow a man who left her—as you might say, at the altar. Miss Pewsey is in London now making arrangements to sail for New York—so she told me yesterday. I wish her all joy," added Lady Jabe, shaking her head, "but I fear the man will spend her money and leave her."

When Lady Jabe went Olivia thought over the projected departure of Miss Pewsey on the trail of Dr. Forge. She was glad at heart that her enemy was leaving Marport, but could not help thinking that the bitter little woman was going out of her way to make trouble for herself. And as Forge was wanted for participation in Markham Ainsleigh's murder, Olivia thought she would inform her husband of his whereabouts, so that he might be brought back if necessary. But Rupert listened thoughtfully, and then replied after consideration.

"I won't move in the matter," he said calmly. "Forge behaved like a scoundrel, but as he has gone, I leave him in God's hands. He will get his deserts yet, Olivia."

"Will you send him the ten thousand pounds, Rupert?"

"No," said the young man decisively. "I shall certainly not do that. Forge deserves some punishment and shall have it, by being deprived of the money he sinned to obtain. He did not kill my poor father, but he certainly brought about his death indirectly. Leave him to God, Olivia. As for ourselves, we will get our own money from Lo-Keong, and restore the Abbey."

"And Miss Pewsey's mortgage?"

"It is due shortly before Christmas, and I shall be able

to pay it off before then. Miss Pewsey has done her worst, Olivia. Henceforth she will be harmless."

"And what about her punishment, Rupert?"

"I should think the loss of Forge has punished her. And, if she really intends to follow him, she will be more disappointed. The man will not marry her. No, Olivia, Miss Pewsey also sinned to get money, but she will be punished, you may be certain."

The next evening Rupert again assumed his old suit and heavy cloak and went away. Olivia clung to him as he left the door. "Oh, my darling, be careful," she said; "if you are killed—"

"I won't be," Rupert assured her. "I have taken the precaution to write telling Rodgers of this meeting. He will bring, by my advice, a couple of plain-cloth policemen to Penters Alley, and if there is trouble, both the Major and I will be able to get away."

Comforted thus, Olivia kissed her husband, and saw him drive down the avenue. Then she returned to her room to count the moments until he returned. All their troubles had brought Olivia and Rupert closer together, and in their implicit trust in one another lay the elements of future happiness.

Ainsleigh found the Major also plainly dressed, waiting at the station, and the two were speedily on their way to town. Owing to an accident to the train, they were late in arriving at Liverpool Street station and the Major fumed. "We won't be in time," he said when they went to the underground railway.

"Oh, I think so," said Rupert calmly; "it's just as well we should not be too early. I want Rodgers and his men to be on the spot."

"But what do you think will come of all this?" asked Tidman nervously.

"I think we will find the papers."

"But if Tung-Yu had them, he would not have written to me."

"He is playing some sort of game. I can't understand, and I have given up theorizing. Let us wait."

The Major grumbled a little, but finally agreed that Ainsleigh was right. They soon arrived at Rotherhithe, and stepped out into the main street. The night was fine, and there was a bright moon. "I like this better than when I was here last," said Rupert, as the two went down to Penters Alley.

"It's a good thing there's a moon," said the Major, casting a glance upward; "if these Chinamen try to bolt, we can chase them."

"Do you expect Hwei to be there also?"

"I can't say," said Tidman, "but if Tung-Yu is, I suspect Hwei won't be far off. They work in couples as you know."

"And pull against each other like ill-matched dogs," said Rupert; "a queer compact, this."

"It's silly. I think the mandarin must be mad with all this rubbish about his gimcrack god Kwang-Ho. Here we are—and there's the lantern. What a narrow street!"

They stepped down the alley in the bright moonlight. The lantern flared above the same house as Rupert had entered before, and at the door stood a small figure. It was the Chinese boy dressed in red. "Ah!" said Rupert significantly, "Hwei is certainly here, as well as Tung-Yu. We'll have trouble."

"If Hwei tries to kill me, I'll shoot," said the Major,

and produced a neat revolver. "I've held my life in my hands before now."

Rupert was about to speak to the boy who stood silently before the closed door, when he heard a long agonized scream within the house. The boy smiled in a cruel manner, and Rupert tried to dash past. But the boy prevented him. Tidman, however, was more fortunate and flung himself against the door. Evidently, a tragedy was taking place inside. As the Major ran forward, the door opened suddenly and Burgh dashed out and down the street, toward the river. After him came Tung-Yu, his face alive with fury. Tidman gave a shout and made after the two, but Rupert, wondering who was being killed, sprang down the passage and entered the room where formerly he had met with the adventure. A tall Chinaman was standing in the middle of the floor wiping a knife on his blouse. He turned, and Rupert beheld Hwei. The Chinaman pointed to the floor with a ghastly smile. "The doom of the god Kwang-Ho," said he, and ran out of the house swiftly.

Rupert cast his eyes on a body lying on the floor. It was that of a woman and from her breast a stream of blood was flowing. She was not yet dead, but looked up with a pain-drawn face. Ainsleigh drew back with an exclamation. It was Miss Pewsey.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHASE.

RUPERT stared at the wounded woman amazed. How came Miss Pewsey into this den? He was so astonished, that he forgot to call for assistance. Miss Pewsey gave a moan and opened her eyes. At once she recognized Ainsleigh, for the light from the tasselled lantern overhead fell full on his amazed face.

"So you are safe," said Miss Pewsey with difficulty; "didn't Tung-Yu kill you?"

"I have just arrived," said Rupert, "your nephew has gone out, followed by Tung-Yu."

"I hope he'll catch him," muttered Miss Pewsey; "Tung-Yu stabbed me. Clarence snatched the papers and ran away, leaving me here to die."

"How did you get the papers?" asked Rupert startled.

"I got them from Clarence—he asked me to come up here, and—oh," she fell back insensible. Rupert thought she was dead and, forgetting where he was, cried loudly for assistance. He heard footsteps approaching and Lo-Keong in sober attire entered. The stately Chinaman was roused out of his usual self. He appeared disturbed and his face was distorted. "Rodgers and his men are chasing Tung-Yu," said Lo-Keong, grasping Rupert's arm, "go after them. Tung-Yu has the papers."

"But Miss Pewsey."

Lo-Keong started back. "That woman," he cried, as

startled as Rupert had been; "pooh, let her die. She deserves her fate. She has been the cause of the trouble. Go—go, Mr. Ainsleigh—go after Tung-Yu."

"But Miss Pewsey!" repeated Rupert, seeing the woman open her eyes, and recognizing that life yet remained.

"I'll see to her. I'll get a doctor." Lo-Keong struck the gong near the door, "but get me those papers. All my life depends upon them. Remember—one hundred thousand pounds—go—go. It may be too late. Don't allow Tung-Yu to escape."

Rupert was quite bewildered as the Chinaman pushed him out of the door. Then recognizing that he could do nothing to help Miss Pewsey, and that Lo-Keong, for his own sake, would do all he could to keep her alive, so that he might learn how the packet came into her possession, Rupert ran out of the house, and found the street filled with screaming Chinamen and chattering Europeans. Some policemen were coming down the alley from the main thoroughfare, and every one appeared to be alarmed. The ragged mob rushed into various doors, at the sight of the officers, but the Chinamen still continued to cackle and scream. Suddenly Rupert heard a revolver shot, and wondered if the Major had got into trouble. Remembering that Burgh with Tung-Yu in pursuit had gone down the alley toward the water, he raced in the same direction, and at once, two policemen, seeing him go, followed. There was no time to undeceive them, so Rupert ran on, eager to come up with Burgh. He had the papers, according to Miss Pewsey, and in spite of Lo-Keong's statement Ainsleigh suspected that Miss Pewsey was right. Else Tung-Yu would not be in pursuit of the buccaneer. As Rupert tore down the moonlit alley, he heard the high, clear

voice of the mandarin calling on the police to stop. Then the tumult recommenced.

It mattered little to Ainsleigh. As he raced blindly on, he felt a thrill of joy in his veins. It seemed to him that he had never lived before, and that this man-hunt was the climax of life. At the end of the Alley he came on a dilapidated wharf, which ran out into the turbid water, and saw a stout figure dancing on this. At once he hurried down to find Major Tidman, who recognized him at once.

"There was a boat waiting," gasped the Major, seizing Rupert's arm. "Burgh jumped into it and pushed off. Tung-Yu came after, and as the boat was already in mid-stream he plunged into the water."

"Where is Hwei?"

"Rodgers and his men are after him. I fired a shot and, I believe, I hit Tung-Yu, as he was swimming. Who has the papers?"

"Burgh. Keep a look-out for him. I'll run along the bank," and before the Major could expostulate, Ainsleigh dashed up the wharf and ran along the bank of the river.

He did this because his quick eye had seen a black head bobbing in the water below the wharf. The swimmer was evidently making for the near shore. Rupert did not know if it was Tung-Yu or Hwei, but hurried at top speed along the bank, in the hope of catching the man when he came ashore. He sped along a kind of narrow way, for here, the old houses of Rotherhithe came down, almost to the water's edge. There were lights in some of the windows, but for the most part, these were in darkness. To Rupert's left, loomed the house, and on his right was the river bank, shelving down to the glittering water. A few piles ran out into the stream, and as the river was low, there were acres

of evil-smelling mud. The man was making for the bank and battling hard against the stream, which was sweeping him down. Rupert shouted, and seeing him on the bank, the swimmer seemed to stop, apparently dreading the reception he would get.

Finally he resumed his stroke, and made for a wharf, some distance down. Ainsleigh ran for this, but was stopped by a wooden fence. He managed to climb over, and raced on to the wharf; but the swimmer was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly, Rupert caught sight of a figure crawling up the bank a little distance below, and again ran up the wharf to the pathway. The man who had landed, caught sight of him, and leaping on to the hard path, ran along the river bank, but in a swaying manner as though his powers of endurance were exhausted. Considering how hard he had battled with the current, probably the man's strength had given out and Rupert, feeling fresh and fit, thought he would have no difficulty in catching up. But the man ran hard, and then dropped out of sight below the bank. Apparently he had taken to the river again. Rupert raced down so quickly as to overshoot the mark where the man had slipped down. While looking round, he caught sight of him again. He ran up the bank and dodged into a narrow side street. Rupert was after him in a moment. The man had vanished round a corner—so Ainsleigh thought—but when Rupert came after, he saw the street in the moonlight was perfectly empty, and turned back. The fugitive had tricked him by dodging into a dark corner, and was again on the bank. He leaped on the wharf, and scrambled down the piles to a boat which swung at the end of a long rope. While he hauled this in painfully and pant-

ingly, Rupert leaped on him. The man looked up with an oath and closed with his pursuer. It was Burgh.

"The papers—the papers," gasped Rupert, "you give them up."

"I'll kill you first," said Burgh, setting his teeth and, exhausted as he was, he struggled with preternatural strength. The two men swung and swayed on the edge of the wharf, till Burgh tripped up his opponent and both fell into the water. Rupert still held his grip, and felt the body of Burgh grow heavy. He rose to the surface dragging at the buccaneer, and, as the two had fallen into shallow water, Rupert staggered on to the evil-smelling mud. He was obliged to let go Burgh, who apparently had been playing possum, for he rose to his feet and made a feeble attempt to climb the bank. Seeing this, Rupert, who was almost exhausted himself with the long pursuit and the cold douche, struck out, and Burgh with a cry of rage fell flat into the mud. The next moment Rupert was kneeling on his chest. "The papers, you scoundrel," he said between his teeth.

"Haven't got them. Tung-Yu—"

"You lie. Give me those papers, or I'll tear your clothes off to find them."

Burgh tried to utter a taunting laugh, but the effort was too much for his strength. He stopped suddenly, and with a sob closed his eyes. The body became inert, and as Rupert could see no wound, he concluded that the buccaneer had fainted. At once he removed his knee and began his search. He went deliberately through the pockets of the insensible man, and finally came across a packet bound in red brocade. It was in Burgh's breast, next to the skin. Rupert, with this in his hand, rose with a gasp of relief.

He had the papers after all, and now could hope to get the money from the mandarin. He slipped the important packet into his pocket, and then producing a flask of brandy, he forced a few drops between the clenched teeth of his antagonist. He did not wish the man to die, and, moreover, he was desirous of questioning him. In a few moments Burgh opened his eyes. "You," he said, as soon as he recovered his scattered senses, and he made an effort to rise.

"No you don't," said Rupert, pushing him back, "you'll try and reach for your revolver."

"Go slow," muttered Burgh, lying on his back in the mud. "I give in, Ainsleigh. You've won."

"I've got the papers, if that's what you mean. They shall be given to Lo-Keong."

"And you'll get the five thousand."

"I'll get one hundred thousand," said Rupert, keeping a watchful eye on his late opponent.

"Huh," said Burgh with a groan, "what luck! And all I have got, is a ducking. Let me up and give me some more brandy. Remember, I saved your life from Forge, Ainsleigh."

"Quite so and you tried to kill me just now," said Rupert dryly. "I think we are quits. However, here's the brandy, and you can sit up. No treachery, mind, or I'll shoot you," and Rupert pulled out his Derringer.

The buccaneer gave a grunt and sat up with an effort. "I'm not up to a row," he gasped. "There's no fight left in me. Great Scott, to think I was so near success. I'll be poor for the rest of my life I guess."

"You'll be hanged for the murder of Miss Wharf, you mean."

Burgh took a deep draught of the brandy which put new life into his veins. He actually grinned when he took the flask from his lips. "I reckon that's not my end," said he. "I never killed the old girl. No, sir—not such a flat."

"Then who did kill her?"

"Find out," was the gracious response.

"See here, Burgh," said Rupert, swinging himself on to a pile of the wharf. "I mean to get to the bottom of this business once and for all. The papers shall be given to the Marquis and then I hope we shall hear the last of this fan business. But I must know who killed—"

"There—there," said Burgh with a shrug, and after another drink, "I cave in: you've got the bulge on me. But I guess, if you want to keep those papers, you'd best clear out, Tung-Yu will be along soon looking for them. I leaped into a boat and pushed out, but that Chinese devil swam after, and when I got into trouble with the oars, he climbed on board with a long knife. I jumped overboard and made for the bank, where you raced me down. But I guess Tung-Yu will bring that craft of his ashore and he's hunting for me like a dog as he is."

"Rodgers and Hwei and Lo-Keong and a lot of policemen are hunting for Tung-Yu," said Rupert coolly, "so you need give yourself no further trouble. Tell me why you killed Miss Wharf?"

"I didn't, confound you," growled Burgh.

"Then you know who did?"

"Yes—it was Forge."

"That's a lie. Forge wrote to my wife, and denied that you gave him the tie."

"Then Tidman killed the old girl."

"No. He was with me on the beach. Come now, you shan't get off in this way. Tell me who is guilty?"

"If I do, will you let me go?"

"I make no bargains. Out with it."

Burgh looked black, but being tired out and at the mercy of Rupert's revolver, he growled sulkily, "It was Aunt Lavinia."

"Miss Pewsey—that frail little woman—impossible."

"Frail," echoed the buccaneer with scorn, "she's as tough as hickory and as wicked a little devil as ever breathed. Why, she learned about the fan from Forge when he was delirious and gave away the show to Lo-Keong in China—"

"I know that. And she wished Olivia to have the fan, that she might be killed."

"That's so, you bet. But old Wharf got it, and so, was killed."

"But not by Tung-Yu or Hwei."

"No." Burgh took a final drink and having emptied the flask flung it into the river. Then he took out a cigarette, which was dry enough to light. When smoking, he began to laugh. "Well, this is a rum show," said he. "I guess you've got all the fun. I'm sold proper."

"Tell me your story," said Rupert imperatively; "I want to get back to Penters Alley to see your aunt."

"Oh, I guess she's a goner by this time," said Burgh easily. "Tung-Yu knifed her."

"You mean Hwei. I found him wiping the knife."

"No. Tung-Yu stuck her, and dropped the knife. Aunty was just passing the packet to Hwei, when Tung-Yu stabbed her. I reckon he intended to grab the packet, but I was too sharp for him, and caught it away from his

hand. Then I raced out and he after me. Hwei stayed behind to clean the knife, I reckon."

"No, he followed you two almost immediately."

"Then both Chinamen will be here soon. You'd best cut."

"Not till I learn the truth."

"I've told you the truth," snapped Burgh in a weary voice. "My old aunt strangled Miss Wharf. Yes. Aunty told me of the tie, and asked me to get it for her. I didn't know what she wanted to do with it, so I did. I took it out of your pocket when Dalham was out of the room. Then I gave it to aunty. She told Miss Wharf that Tung-Yu wanted to see her on the steps after eleven. Miss Wharf went there and then aunty followed and sat down beside her on the steps. I guess she kept her in talk and then slipped the tie round her old throat and pulled with all her might. And she's strong, I can tell you," added Clarence confidentially. "She nearly broke my arm one day twisting it. Miss Wharf hadn't time to call out, and was deader in two minutes, for aunty froze on to her like death."

"Death, indeed," murmured Rupert with a shudder.

"Well, then aunty bucked up round by the front of the hotel with the fan in her pocket and left the tie round the neck of the old girl, so that *you* might hang. All went well, but the next day I went to aunty and asked for the fan. She was very sick, as she intended to sell it that day to Tung-Yu. But Tung-Yu had cut along with Hwei in the yacht, both thinking they might be accused of the murder. They thought that old Tidman did the biznai," grinned Burgh, "and I let them think so, having my own game to play with aunty."

"Well," said Ainsleigh shortly, "and what did you do?"

"I told aunty I'd split if I didn't get the fan, so she passed it along to me. Then I learned about the secret from Tung-Yu—the waving in the smoke, you know. I found out the kind of smoke from Forge—"

"And repaid him by a lying accusation."

"That's so," said Burgh coolly, "there ain't no flies on me. But let's heave ahead. It's cold sitting here."

"Go on, then," said Ainsleigh sharply.

"Well, I learned about the picture and guessed about the abbey. The picture was plain enough. I came that day you found me, to see the place."

"And stole the packet then?"

"No, I waited till night and rigged myself up as the Abbot. I knew it would make any one sick who saw a monk about at that hour."

"Not me," said Ainsleigh, "if I had caught you—"

"Well, you very nearly did," confessed Burgh candidly, "I came at night and climbed all four trees before I nipped the box. Then I prized it open and climbed down leaving the box, so that Lo-Keong might get sold when he came to look. Just as I got down, that old housekeeper of yours screeched, and cut. I was startled and dropped the fan. Not wishing to leave that behind, I began to look for it. Then you and the butler turned up and I lighted out sharp."

"What happened next?"

"Well, I wanted the money, but not knowing the days of Hwei and Tung-Yu thought I might get stabbed instead of the money. So I took the packet to aunty, and asked her to go up, telling her Tung-Yu would give her the money. She fell into the trap."

"But she knew that Hwei—"

"It wasn't Hwei's day," said Burgh, "at least it turned

out so, though I didn't know it at the time, and so sent on aunty to get the cash. I intended to pull the dollars out of her when she did get them, or leave her to die if Hwei knifed her."

"You blackguard."

"Go slow," said Burgh coolly, "aunty was no friend to you. I say, do you know why aunty wanted me to marry Olivia? It was because I'm married already and if—"

He got no further. Rupert knocked him backward into the mud. Burgh leaped to his feet, and suddenly cried "Look behind." Rupert did so very foolishly, and Burgh flung himself forward. But all the same Burgh was right to warn Ainsleigh. A man was staggering along the wharf. He was in Chinese dress.

"Knife him, Tung-Yu," cried Burgh, struggling with Rupert. "I'll hold him. He's got the papers."

The Chinaman gave a screech and hurled himself on the pair. Rupert wrenched himself away from Burgh and struck out at Tung-Yu. At the same moment he heard another cry, and Hwei came leaping down the wharf. Before Tung-Yu could turn his enemy was on him, and as Rupert was again closing in death grips with Burgh, he had no time to see what was taking place. He could hear the Chinamen snarling like angry cats on the wharf and was himself fighting in the mud with Burgh for his life. Luckily Rupert got his hand free and it was the one which held the revolver. He fired at random—three shots.

There was a shout in the distance: but at that moment, the buccaneer seized him by the throat and threw him down. Rupert with a strangled cry felt himself being forced beneath the water, and thought the end had come. He could hear the struggle between Hwei and Tung-Yu go-

ing on furiously and hear also very faintly the deep laughter of his opponent. Then he lost consciousness. Everything became dark, and Rupert's last thought was that all his pains had been in vain. He would die, and Olivia would be a widow.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FULFILLED PROPHECY.

WHEN Rupert came to his senses, the surroundings seemed to be familiar. He had lost consciousness on the banks of the Thames, and during a fierce struggle with a treacherous foe. He opened his eyes to find himself in his own bed in his own room at Royabay. But he felt strangely weak and indisposed to talk. After a glance, he closed his eyes again. Then after what seemed to him to be a few minutes—it was really half an hour—he opened them again, and this time he saw Olivia bending over him with an anxious face. "Dearest," he murmured weakly.

"Oh, Rupert, do you know me?"

"Yes. Where am I—what are you doing here?"

"You are at the Abbey. Don't speak. Take this," and some beef tea was held to his dry lips.

Ainsleigh drank a little and then fell asleep again. When he did so there was an artificial light in the room, but when he awoke the sun was streaming in through the window. But his wife was still beside his bed, and still looked anxious. However, she gave a little cry of joy when Rupert spoke in a stronger voice. He was beginning to collect his scattered senses. "Have I been ill long?" he asked.

"Four days," she replied; "don't talk, darling."

"But the packet?"

"The Marquis has it safe."

"Burgh?"

"He has escaped. Don't talk."

"Miss Pewsey," said Rupert faintly.

"She is dead."

"Then Miss Pewsey *did* strangle your aunt."

"Yes—yes—the doctor says you are not to talk."

"Just one more question. Those Chinamen?"

"Hwei and Tung-Yu. They were drowned."

Rupert smiled weakly and turning on his side went off into a deep sleep. The doctor, who called later, said it was the best thing he could do. "He has had a severe shock," said he to Olivia, "and his nervous system is shaken. You may be thankful he did not wake with a disordered brain."

"Oh, doctor, you don't think—"

"No! No! It's all right. He would not have asked those questions if anything was wrong with his mind. In a few weeks he will be quite himself. But I think, Mrs. Ainsleigh, that you should take him abroad for a time."

Olivia gladly promised to do this, the more so, as she wanted to escape herself from Marport for a time. The news of Miss Pewsey's death had caused a great sensation, and a still greater one was caused by the publication in the paper of her crime. Every one now knew that the bitter little woman had strangled Miss Wharf, and every one was very severe on her. The funeral had to be conducted quietly, as the mob showed signs of intending to interrupt. However, the police kept back the irate crowd and Miss Pewsey was buried in a quiet corner of St. Peter's churchyard where, a few weeks before, she had hoped to be married. But her intended bridegroom was in America, and Miss Pewsey's mortal part was in the grave. Where her immortal soul was and what would become of it, was talked over by people, who were less forgiving than they ought to have been.

Ainsleigh recovered his strength quicker than the doctor thought he would. Olivia nursed him with devoted tenderness and often wept as she thought how nearly she had lost him. When Rupert was better able to hear the recital, she gave him a short account of his rescue. "Those three shots you fired brought up Rodgers and his men who were searching for Hwei and Tung-Yu. They came, just in time to pull Mr. Burgh off you. He was holding you down under the water, and Mr. Rodgers thought you were dead. However, the doctor was called, and they brought you round. Then I was telegraphed for, and I insisted that you should be taken back to Royabay. I had my way, although the doctor in London said it would be dangerous. So here you are, darling, in your own home, and soon will be all right."

"Thanks to your nursing," said Ainsleigh, kissing her; "but, Olivia, tell me about Miss Pewsey."

"She made a confession before she died," said Mrs. Ainsleigh. "Oh, Rupert, even though she is dead, I can't help saying, that she was a wicked little woman."

"Wicked indeed," said Rupert, recalling what Burgh had said; "she wished you to marry Burgh, because he was married already."

"In which case he would have deserted me," said Mrs. Ainsleigh with a crimson face; "he was as bad as she. But listen, Rupert, if you feel strong enough."

"Go on," said Ainsleigh and held his wife's hand while she talked.

"Well then," began Mrs. Ainsleigh, "after the Marquis pushed you out of the Penters Alley room, he went and got a doctor, who said that Miss Pewsey was dying. She heard him, having regained her senses, and then began to

cry, saying how wicked she had been. For the sake of every one, Lo-Keong asked her to make a confession. As soon as she knew there was no hope of her recovery, she agreed to do so. A clergyman was called in and he took down what she said. The confession was witnessed and signed and Mr. Rodgers has it."

"What did she confess?" asked Rupert.

"Oh," Olivia covered her face, "it was really awful. She said that she was always jealous of Aunt Sophia, and of me. She wished to get the five hundred a year. At first she thought she would get it by marrying me to her nephew, and then she could finger the money, when my aunt died. But she soon saw that I was not to be guided in the way she desired, and cast about for a new plan."

"But, Olivia, if she knew Burgh was married—"

"Oh, that didn't matter to her. She intended he should marry me and then if I got the money she intended to say there was no marriage, unless I gave her the five hundred a year. She wished to disgrace me."

"A kind of blackmail, in fact."

"Yes. But I can't understand how she intended to reckon with Mr. Burgh, who is not an easy person to deal with. Well, Rupert, when she found that I would not marry Mr. Burgh, she tried to get a new will made. She did not succeed for a long time. Meanwhile, she heard about the fan and wrote to Lo-Keong. When she saw the advertisement she was alarmed, thinking Aunt Sophia would be killed before the new will was made. Luckily for her, she overheard about our secret marriage and told Aunt Sophia who made a new will, and who intended, after the ball, to turn me out of the house."

"But your aunt was so kind to you at that time."

"So as to make things harder for me," said Olivia sadly. "Poor Aunt Sophia, she was quite under the thumb of Miss Pewsey who really did hypnotise her—at least she claimed she had power over her in the confession. But I don't think it was difficult to get Aunt Sophia to alter her will, seeing she hated you so, and could not bear to think that the five hundred a year should go to the son of the man, she thought, had scorned her."

"That was not true; my father—"

"Yes! Yes! I know. Don't talk too much, Rupert, you are weak yet. But let me go on," added Olivia, passing her hand over her husband's forehead. "Well then, when the new will was made, Miss Pewsey let Tung-Yu know that Aunt Sophia would have the fan at the ball. She didn't know whether Tung-Yu or Hwei was to kill the possessor of the fan, and when she learned that Aunt Sophia was to sell the fan next day, she was very angry."

"Why? With her influence she could have got the money."

"Not all to herself, and besides she wanted the five hundred a year and Aunt Sophia out of the way. Moreover, that scarf I knitted for you gave her a chance of throwing the blame on you. She got Clarence to get it, and then lured Miss Wharf—my aunt—to the steps where she strangled her."

"Yes. Burgh told me. I know the rest. Her nephew made her give up the fan, learned the secret, and stole the packet. Then he made his aunt take it to Penters Alley."

Olivia nodded. "And Miss Pewsey thought she would get the money, as Burgh said it was Tung-Yu's hour."

"So it was. He spoke truly enough, although he didn't risk giving up the packet himself. Well?"

"But Tung-Yu killed Miss Pewsey after all. She asked twenty thousand pounds and refused to give it for less. Clarence Burgh, who had come up with her, came into the room with Hwei, who saw the packet pass, but could not interfere."

"Because it wasn't his hour."

"Yes. And all would have been well, had not Tung-Yu suddenly disobeyed the god Kwang-Ho's commands and stabbed Miss Pewsey. Of course, Hwei was released from his oath by this act and tried to get the packet. But Clarence Burgh snatched it from both and ran away. Tung-Yu went after him, and then Hwei followed, after wiping the knife. Then—"

"I know the rest. I got the packet from Burgh."

"Yes, and he tried to drown you. Hwei and Tung-Yu were struggling together, as Tung-Yu wanted to get the packet from you. But Hwei stabbed him with the same knife he had used to kill Miss Pewsey and in his death grip Tung-Yu drew Hwei into the water. Both were dead and still locked in each other's embrace when they were drawn out. Lo-Keong said that Tung-Yu deserved his doom for having trifled with Kwang-Ho, but he mourns for Hwei."

"It seems to be much of a muchness," said Rupert, "and Burgh?"

"Rodgers threw himself on him, and he was secured. You were taken away, and I was telegraphed for. But while Burgh was being taken to prison he contrived to escape, and got away in the darkness."

"But, Olivia, it was a bright moonlight night."

"At first it was, but the moon set and darkness came on. The police have been searching for Burgh, but he has not

been found and it is supposed he has got away from England."

"I hope so," said Rupert with a shudder. "I never wish to set eyes on him again. So that's the end of it all."

"Not quite. Lo-Keong is in the library with Mr. Asher. Oh, Rupert, you must prepare yourself for the best of news."

The young man rose, and was led downstairs by his wife. "I am quite ready to hear the good news," he said, as they descended. "I have had far too much bad news in my life."

As Olivia said, the lawyer was waiting in the library and stood before the fire with an expectant face. Lo-Keong, in even more gorgeous robes than he had worn on the occasion of his first visit, was seated in his stately manner near the window. He rose as the master of Roya-bay entered, and came forward with a serious smile.

"My young friend," said the mandarin. "I have to thank you for saving my life. The papers which would have ruined me, and which would have cost me my head, have been burnt. Hwei is dead, and Tung-Yu; so no one but yourself knows what those papers meant. My august mistress will never have proof that I was engaged in the Boxer rebellion, and Hop-Sing will be degraded forever."

"And you, Marquis?"

"I shall receive the yellow jacket," said the mandarin, proudly, "now I remain but a short time here. I go to London in an hour, and this evening I leave for the Continent on my way to China. We shall never meet again, Mr. Ainsleigh, unless you come to Pekin."

"No," said Olivia, instinctively protecting Rupert, "we have had enough of China, Marquis. Sit down, Rupert."

Ainsleigh took a chair, and the Marquis smiled blandly. "Well, well, well," he said, "it is natural you should feel rather nervous of my countrymen, though I assure you, if you do visit me, that you will be quite safe and highly honored."

"No, thank you, Marquis," said Rupert wearily, for he was beginning to feel fatigued.

"I see you are tired," said Lo-Keong in his stately manner, "so I will merely say I hope to send you some presents from my own country and then Mr. Asher can speak," he bowed to the solicitor.

"I am glad to tell Mr. Ainsleigh," said the lawyer, "that the Marquis has handed me securities which show that the sum of one hundred thousand pounds is invested in your name. We can transfer the securities to English investments if you like, but—"

"I'll leave them in Chinese," said Rupert quickly.

Lo-Keong bowed in a gratified manner. "You will be wise," he said, "they are safe investments and all my interest, at the Imperial court, will go to make you richer if I can."

"You have done enough, Marquis," said Ainsleigh gratefully, "you have given me back my old home."

"And we will be rich besides," said Olivia delightedly.

"There's another thing," said Mr. Asher, looking at the girl. "Miss Pewsey made a will in your favor, Mrs. Ainsleigh."

Olivia drew back with a red face. "Impossible! She hated me."

"Well," said Asher dryly, "I expect she repented of her evil deeds, or perhaps she hated her nephew more than she did you. That gentleman wrote from a Continental

address to Mr. Paster, asking if his aunt had left him the money as she promised. I expect the address is a false one, as Mr. Burgh won't wish to be caught."

"He is a bold man, that," said Lo-Keong.

"He is," assented Asher, "but he won't benefit. Mrs. Ainsleigh gets the five hundred a year, the freehold of Ivy Lodge, and also the mortgage which Miss Wharf bought to ruin Mr. Ainsleigh."

"We have everything—everything," cried Olivia.

"I am very thankful," said Rupert. "Mr. Asher—"

"I'll see you about the investments when you are stronger," said the lawyer; "meanwhile here is the carriage at the door. The Marquis is kind enough to give me a lift," and Mr. Asher took his leave with a profound bow to so opulent a client as Rupert.

The Marquis Lo-Keong came forward with his kind smile. "Before I wish you good-bye and all happiness," he said, holding out the famous fan, "will you take this?"

"No," said Olivia, preventing Rupert from accepting it, "I hate the very sight of the thing. It has blood on it."

"I think you are right, Mrs. Ainsleigh," said the Chinaman gravely, "and, as it has done its duty, it may as well go the way of the packet which now is ashes," and advancing to the fire, he flung the fan on the burning coals. It burst into a blaze, and in a few minutes all had vanished save the slivers of jade and the beads. The housemaid collected these next morning and gave them to Olivia, who threw them off the Marport pier. So that was the end of the mandarin's fan.

"And now," said Lo-Keong, bowing, "good-bye, and great happiness to you both."

Rupert and Olivia shook hands warmly and thanked

him heartily. The mandarin walked out of the room in his stately way, and they went to the window to see him drive off. At the bend of the avenue, he waved his hand graciously, and that was the last the master and mistress or Royabay saw of the man who had owned the fan.

A chuckle at the door made the couple turn from the window. There, peering in, stood Mrs. Pettley who had stuck with her husband to Rupert during his troubles. Her face was shining and old John seemed to be years younger. Mrs. Pettley, for some queer reason, threw a shoe at the pair. "Health and happiness," she said, "begging your pardons both. But to think of money and happiness, and no walking of that blessed monk, who—"

"He never walked," said Rupert smiling, "it was Hwei—"

"Begging your pardon, sir, Hwei—whosoever he is, didn't walk *all* the time. Abbot Raoul did appear, as I can testify and so can John here. But now the prophecy has been fulfilled, perhaps he'll rest quiet in his grave, drat him."

"The prophecy?" said Olivia, who was holding her husband's hand.

From behind Mrs. Pettley came the quavering voice of the ancient butler, declaiming the rude rhymes:—

> "My curse from the tyrants will never depart,
> For a sword in the hands of the angel flashes:
> Till Ainsleigh, poor, weds the poor maid of his heart,
> And gold be brought forth from the holy ashes."

"And that's quite true," said a jovial voice, and Major Tidman, as smart and stout as ever, entered. "How do, Ainsleigh? I'm glad to see you looking so well. Yes,"

he added, sitting down, "you *were* poor Ainsleigh when you married—"

"And I was poor also," cried Olivia.

"Very good, the third line is fulfilled and the fourth—"

"Was gold brought forth from the holy ashes?" asked Rupert.

"Yes, Master Rupert," said old John, "you picked up the fan in the place where the ashes were, and out of the fan has come gold. The prophecy is fulfilled sure enough, and I hope Abbot Raoul will stop walking forever."

"Of course he will," cried Mrs. Pettley, dragging her husband outside, "there's no more trouble for you, Master Rupert and Miss Olivia."

"Mr. and Mrs. Ainsleigh of Royabay," said Tidman laughing, "give them their proper titles, Mrs. Pettley. And I think the present occasion deserves a bottle of port."

The ancient butler went away with his wife to bring forth one of the last bottles of that priceless vintage. Major Tidman, gloating in anticipation, sat still, and smiled with a bland face. But Rupert drew Olivia to the sofa and they sat down where they had often mourned on many a weary day. "Dearest," said Ainsleigh, kissing her.

"We can be happy now," said Olivia, putting her arms round his neck, "for we are rich. We shall take again our proper place in the country."

"We are rich and we are happy," echoed the master of Royabay.

"Ha! ha! You have one hundred thousand pounds, Ainsleigh," said Tidman.

"I have something better."

"What's that?"

"My own dear wife, Olivia Ainsleigh."